

COLLEGE OUTLINE SERIES

# ANCIENT HISTORY

by Albert Hyma  
*Professor of History*  
*University of Michigan*

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## Preface

This outline is intended for the use of students and instructors in courses covering the whole field of general world history, or in other courses devoted entirely to the history of the ancient world. A survey of ancient history such as this should provide a useful supplement to the prescribed textbook, particularly for students who are easily confused by detailed discussions of numerous subjects which seem to follow in rapid succession. Often the reader of the text in question does not have time to digest the subject matter as quickly as would appear desirable or necessary. In such cases the use of the present work may well prove a great boon, resulting in the saving of much valuable time.

The author has often watched his students wander through the labyrinths of ancient history, seeking desperately a real "short-cut" to the desired goal—a thorough understanding of a wonderfully interesting subject which sometimes loses nearly all its charm because simplicity and clarity are lacking in the picture perceived by the bewildered student. Unlike other outlines formerly in use, the present one reads like an actual textbook, although it still remains an outline or digest. It will lighten the task of the student in preparing for daily recitations, and will greatly facilitate the difficult work of reviewing.

Each chapter has been introduced by a brief list of important dates, which will focus the attention of the reader upon what is most significant in each assignment. The paragraph headings printed in bold type and the list of dates following the last chapter, will prove helpful in reviewing for either daily quizzes or final examinations. The bibliography at the end of the book may be used as a guide in extra-curricular readings.

The author wishes to express his cordial thanks to Professor B. C. Clough of Brown University, and to Mr. Morriss H. Needleman, for many constructive criticisms of the original manuscript. The author also wishes to thank the editorial staff at Barnes & Noble, Inc., for valuable suggestions.

—ALBERT HYMA

Ann Arbor, Mich.



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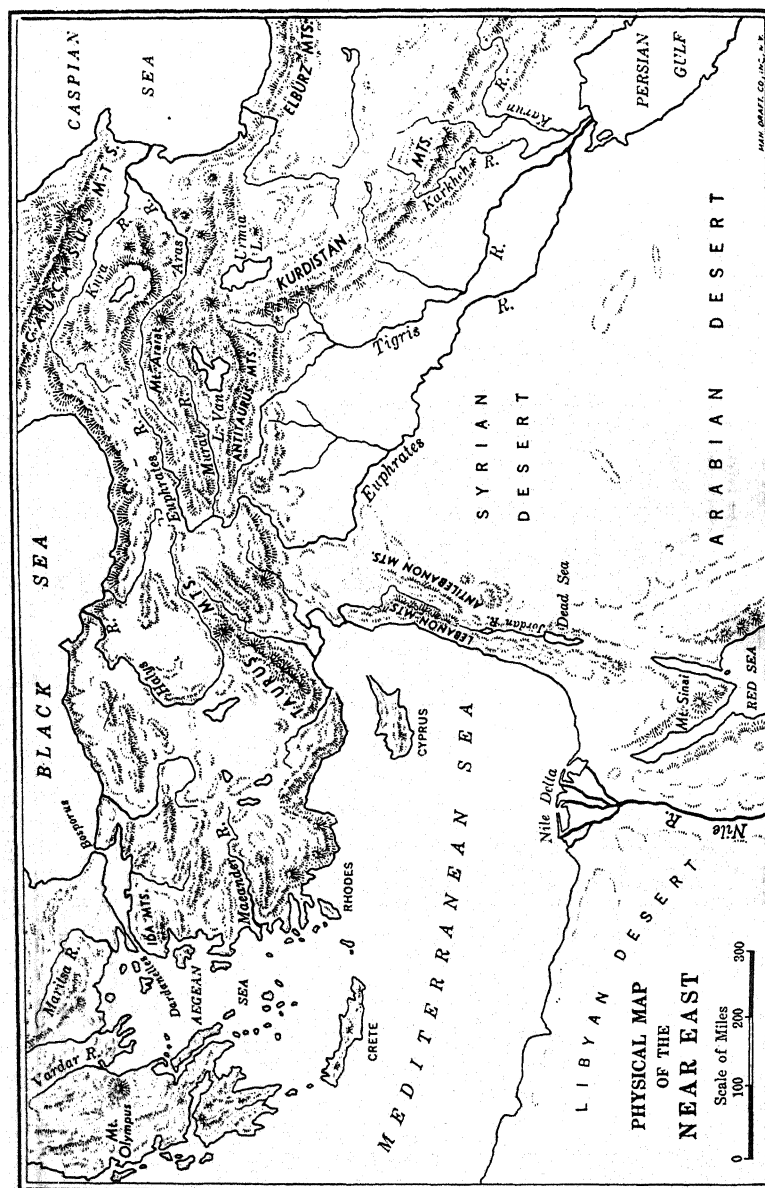
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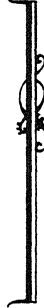
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## Topics



Nature of Preliterary History

Stone Age Civilization

The Age of Metals

How Europe Became Civilized

Rome and the Barbarians

### CHAPTER I.

## INTRODUCTION

Webster's *New International Dictionary* defines history thus: "A narrative of events connected with a real or imaginary object, person, or career. . . . A systematic written account of events, particularly of those affecting a nation, institution, science, or art, and usually connected with a philosophical explanation of their causes. . . . The branch of knowledge that records and explains human progress." From this excellent definition we gather that the purpose of history is to tell the story of human beings from the earliest times to the present day. It describes their political institutions, their social customs, their economic interests, their intellectual achievements, their artistic products, and all other experiences that constitute the story of mankind.

**The Nature of Preliterary History.** Preliterary history covers that section of history in which human beings were not interested in writing, or not able to develop writing. Until the second half of the nineteenth century some scholars assumed that writing was not known anywhere in the world before 2000 B.C. Today it is generally believed that some of the most ancient peoples knew how to write before 3000 B.C. Consequently, the period of history covered in the present chapter precedes the year 3000 B.C.

**The Sources of This Early Period.** It follows, therefore, that in order to determine what kind of lives the earliest people of antiquity lived, we must rely upon sources other than written records. A student of history is aided in this task by the researches of geologists, anthropologists, archeologists, and zoologists. Skeletons, of what are regarded as prehistoric human beings, have been found in many parts of the world. Thousands of implements used by early man have been collected in museums and other buildings. Interesting drawings have been found inscribed upon rocks in caves and elsewhere. Geologists have told us how old are those layers of earth beneath the surface in which skeletons and tools of human beings have been found. Finally, zoologists have attempted to determine if and how human beings were developed out of a certain high type of animal.

#### **CIVILIZED AND UNCIVILIZED LIFE BEFORE 4000 B.C.**

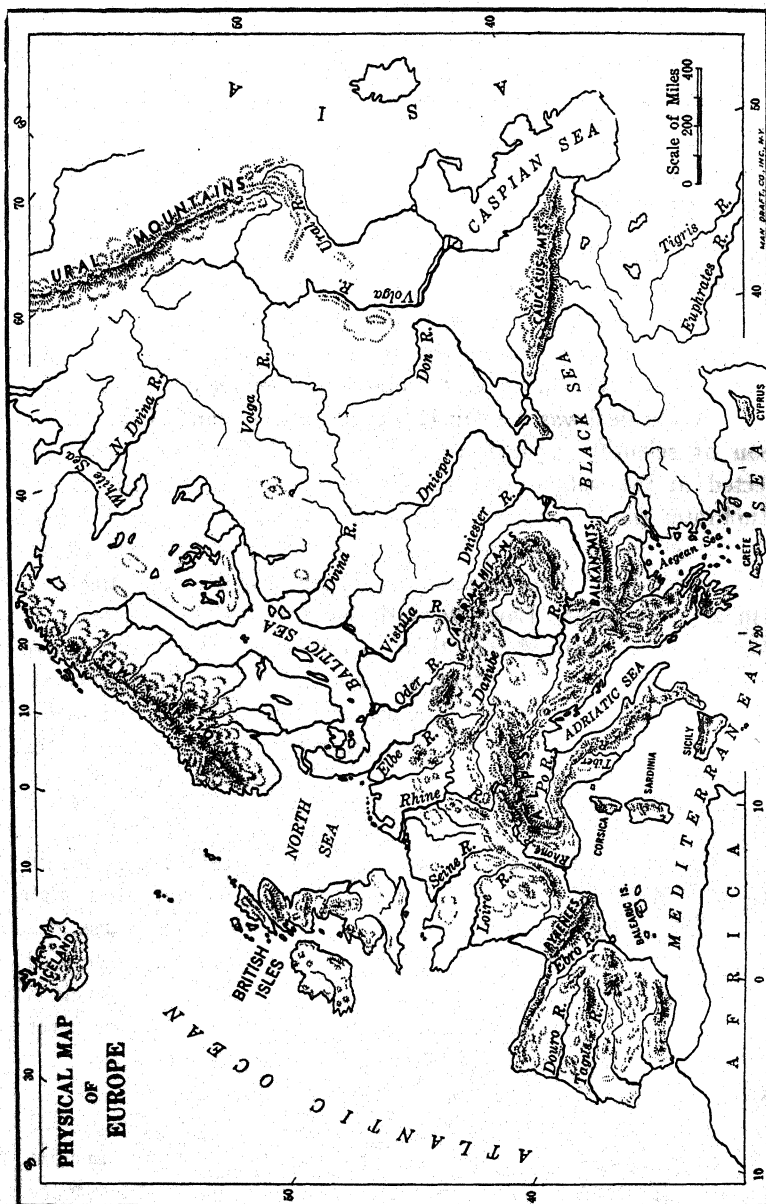
**Stone Age Civilization.** Whenever peoples were making use of crude stone implements, they are said to belong to the Old Stone Age. Those, on the other hand, who had learned to make use of finer and sharper tools, are said to have lived in the New Stone Age. In the Old Stone Age it is believed that man wore no clothing, except perhaps a girdle at the waist. Nor did he have a fixed abode, but sometimes he sought shelter in caves or in trees. When the use of fire was discovered is entirely unknown, nor can we speak with much assurance about the food that the earliest human beings used. No doubt they were often engaged in hunting, and they may have had some domestic animals. Some scholars also mention a Middle Stone Age, during which time human beings had weapons made out of flint, with pressure-chipped edges. They also made use of the bow and arrow, together with the spear. Presumably the weather was now colder in various regions, for more meat was now eaten, and more skins were prepared for clothing, while caves became the homes of many persons. Perhaps in this time man knew more about drawing, painting, and carving. Undoubtedly he also entertained certain religious ideas. In the Late Stone Age or the New Stone Age the weather is said to have been still colder, and more



clothes were needed. More use was made now of agriculture, and various domestic animals were pastured. Along the shores of some of the lakes in Switzerland houses have been found which contained furniture made of wood, pictures, pottery, spoons, and vessels likewise constructed out of wood. Mankind now depended less upon hunting and more upon agriculture and the use of domestic animals.

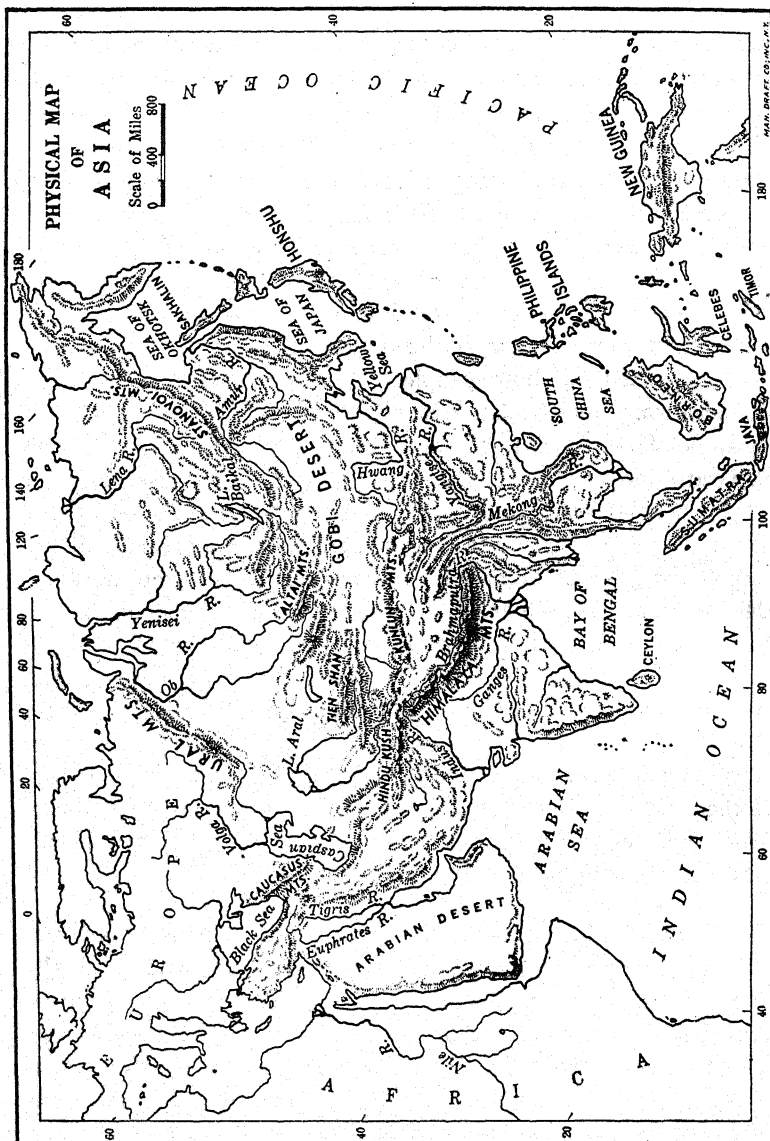
**The Age of Metals.** About 4000 B.C. the inhabitants of ancient Mesopotamia knew how to make use of bronze, copper, and iron. This has been proved by the most recent excavations in that region. But at the very same time the peoples in Europe seem to have been in the Old Stone Age. Between 4000 and 3000 B.C. a great deal was done in Egypt and Mesopotamia in the direction of scientific agriculture and industry. Irrigation was perfected in the valleys of the Nile in Egypt, and those of the Euphrates and the Tigris in Mesopotamia. Since it was impossible for a few men to control the course of those great rivers, it became necessary for the inhabitants to band together and to establish a government. Laws were drawn up, various articles produced were exchanged for others, a distinction was being drawn between servants and masters, and a number of persons were set aside as a separate class to function as priests. When excavators reached the lowest level of land upon which civilization once flourished in Mesopotamia, they found that metals were already in use, that is, between 5000 and 4000 B.C.

**The Rise and Fall of Nations.** The latest researches in Egypt and Mesopotamia clearly reveal that a period of a high degree of civilization would be followed by one of much less culture. In some instances from twelve to fifteen different layers of soil were laid bare, indicating that upon various urban levels a high degree of civilization had been reached, while some later cities were much less highly civilized. After the destruction of such cities, it may have taken centuries to restore the level of prosperity and culture that had once existed upon that site. We all know, for example, that Rome, the greatest city of the ancient world, was invaded many times, so that during the sixth century of our era the records state that not a single human being was left in the town. Exaggerated though this account may have been,



we may say at least that the population declined from more than a million to less than a thousand. We also know that in western Europe during the third, fourth, and fifth centuries of our era, civilization underwent a terrible decline. An economic depression, lasting about two hundred years, witnessed the ruin of the ancient world from Mesopotamia westward to the shores of the Atlantic Ocean. Is it then surprising to learn of the same fate experienced by the cities of the ancient Near East? And is it surprising to learn that when the highly cultured inhabitants of that region ventured forth to invade other countries and to settle there, under less favorable conditions they lost many characteristics of an earlier and more highly civilized age? This must undoubtedly have happened to those peoples who went from Mesopotamia southeastward into India, eastward into China and to Central Asia, northwestward into Asia Minor, and still farther northwestward into Europe. Thus it may well have happened that certain peoples retrogressed from the metal age type of civilization to the stone age form of civilization. Europe was probably peopled by persons from the ancient Near East, who were not able to maintain the high level of agriculture, commerce, and industry to which their ancestors had been accustomed. On the other hand, many peoples rose from a relatively low level of culture, as was the case with the Teutonic peoples, to a much higher level. This may have been done in some cases independently of others, while in other cases the barbarous peoples received most of their culture and information from highly civilized neighbors. This happened to the Franks, the Angles and the Saxons, who invaded respectively Gaul and Briton.

**How Europe Became Civilized.** It is clear to all historians that Europe was originally barbarous, and when it finally emerged out of barbarism to receive the first gifts of civilized life, they were transmitted to the Europeans by the inhabitants of the ancient Near East. We know now that the first homes of civilized man were Mesopotamia and Egypt. Between 3500 and 2500 B.C. the extreme southeastern part of Europe was illuminated by the culture of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia. After this region had basked for a time in the light of Oriental civilization, barbarians swooped down from the north, destroyed part



of the highly civilized life they found there, and then became civilized in turn. These barbarians, these invaders, were the Greeks, who afterward proudly spoke of themselves as the torch-bearers of civilized life, whereas they had been originally nothing but barbarians and destroyers of civilization. Everything that they had had in the field of civilization, they had received from other peoples. Although afterwards the Greeks referred to these peoples as "barbarians," they could not hide from posterity the knowledge that they themselves had been the original barbarians. The Greeks in turn fell before a people that was located still farther to the west.

**Rome and the Barbarians.** The Romans also at one time had been barbarians, but they had been instructed by various peoples in the Italian and Balkan peninsulas. When the decline of Rome came at last, the Germanic barbarians invaded the great empire from the north, destroyed various towns, sacked libraries, and for a time were content with a mediocre degree of culture. But eventually they learned to live side by side with the highly cultured Romans, they adopted highly scientific agriculture, they developed industry and commerce, and later they in turn constructed great nations and a high type of civilization. The time was to come when Germans and Englishmen would look with scorn and contempt upon peoples farther to the south and east. They would also use the term "barbarians" and would sometimes seek to hide the fact that originally they also had been barbarians.

### *Significant Dates*

Oldest Cities Founded . . 4500 B.C.

Golden Age of Sumerian  
Civilization . . 4000-3000 B.C.

Age of Sargon I . . . . 2700 B.C.

Reign of Hammurapi . . 1950 B.C.

## CHAPTER II.

# THE KINGDOMS OF ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA

Since the most recent excavations in the ancient Near East tend to prove that civilized life flourished in ancient Mesopotamia before it did anywhere else, the present work begins as it should with a description of the earliest kingdoms founded in the valley between the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers. It was in this region, according to the Bible story, that the earliest human beings lived. Also in this region, according to the interpretation of many archeologists, cities were constructed (*ca.* 4500 B. C.) before any in Egypt. It can also be demonstrated very easily that from the same region civilization first reached India and China. The extreme southeastern corner of Europe also received from Mesopotamia, as well as from Egypt, its earliest knowledge of civilized life. In southern Mesopotamia the famous city of Ur was built from which Abraham set forth to find a new home in another country, and to become the progenitor of the Hebrew race. Here a number of important nations grew up and declined in turn, to make room for others. Among these were Sumeria, Babylonia, Assyria, Chaldea, and Persia. Here were produced the oldest known written records of the human race. Here also was found

evidence in the form of silt deposited to the depth of eight feet that at one time a huge flood covered the whole of ancient Mesopotamia. The stories of the Creation and the Flood written in this region seem to prove that even ancient Egypt received some forms of civilization from Mesopotamia.

### THE SUMERIANS

**The Land and the People.** Ancient Mesopotamia is the valley of the two rivers known as the Euphrates and the Tigris. They have their sources in the mountains of Asia Minor, and they flow toward the Persian Gulf in a southeasterly direction. To the north of this valley lie the Black and the Caspian seas and to the south beyond the Persian Gulf is the Indian Ocean. To the southwest extends the huge peninsula called Arabia, bounded on the west by the Red Sea and on the south by the Indian Ocean. To the west of the valley lies the high land of Syria, including ancient Palestine. Although much of Syria, and almost all of Arabia, is now a desert, in the period from 4000 to 3000 B. C. there was a stretch of fertile land in the form of a crescent—hence called the Fertile Crescent—which extended in a huge semi-circle from the Persian Gulf on the east around the northern portion of the Arabian peninsula to Palestine on the west. It witnessed the rise and fall of many nations and the migrations of many peoples from east to west and the reverse. The high lands of Arabia and Syria were barren throughout almost the whole of each year. The valley of the Euphrates and the Tigris, however, became increasingly fertile because of the silt that was brought down each spring and early summer from the melting snow in the mountains of Asia Minor. In Mesopotamia itself the amount of rain that fell was but small, averaging about three inches annually. But the absence of rainfall in the valley was made up for by great amounts of water brought down from the eastern and northern mountains. These streams would flood the lowlands, but soon were checked in their course by man-sewn networks. Canals were dug and dikes were constructed along the banks of the tumultuous streams. Here lived between 4000 and 3000 B. C. a people that was more civilized than any other of

that time. Just who they were and whence they came is not known, but they are called Sumerians. Even before 3500 B. C. they were highly civilized. They made use of metals. They lived in cities, around which they constructed walls, partly to protect themselves against the rising waters, and partly to ward off enemy attacks. Practically nothing was known about them before the opening of the twentieth century, but, owing to the arduous labors of archeologists during the last two decades, the wealth of material brought to light has compelled many scholars to give up their former opinion that Egypt was the home of the oldest civilization known.

**Political History of Sumeria.** The Sumerians were ruled by a king who lived in an immense palace. But just how he ruled can not be ascertained. He and his people fought wars against neighboring tribes, until for a time the Sumerians seem to have dominated the whole of ancient Mesopotamia. Berosus, the Chaldean historian who flourished in the third century B. C., mentions ten patriarchs or kings who ruled before the great Flood, which must have occurred between 3800 and 3500 B. C. Kish, Nippur, and Ur were among the chief cities of Sumeria, and in the last-named has been found a royal palace made of sun-dried brick. But after 3000 B. C. the Sumerians underwent a decline, and about 2630 B. C. the valley of the Tigris-Euphrates fell into the hands of another tribe of people, belonging apparently to the Semites. The kings of ancient Sumeria made use of chariots and their troops were armed with copper helmets and spears. Since arrowheads and parts of bows have been found in their tombs, we must conclude that they also made use of such. The Sumerian troops were well organized, marching in compact units, and were also disciplined, contrasting favorably with the troops employed by the Semites.

**Sumerian Society.** The Sumerians had priests who exercised religious functions for the people. According to many present authorities, the Sumerians were originally monotheistic in their belief, for the most ancient written records state clearly that they believed in only one God. This is a very important fact to note, because until very recently (1937) a large number of historians believed that mankind originally was polytheistic and



that gradually as human beings became civilized, they formed a higher conception of the deity. The social classes among the Sumerians included the aristocrats, to whom the government officials and the priests belonged, the free landholders, the traders, and the slaves. There seems to have been little distinction between slaves and freemen. The laws, considering the time, were remarkably liberal, penalties were as a rule justly prescribed, marriage was monogamous, and women possessed a considerable amount of freedom, contrasting favorably with Greek women of a much later time. However, the husband had the right to sell his wife and children to pay for his debts. This, by the way, was also the custom among the primitive Germans of the third and fourth centuries of our era.

**Agriculture, Commerce, and Industry.** The Sumerians were very skillful in agriculture, taking full advantage of the fertility of the soil and of the water supply. They raised great crops of grain, vegetables, and dates. They kept such domestic animals as cows, sheep, and goats. For plowing they made use of oxen while the donkeys pulled their carts and chariots. They also had a flourishing dairy industry, as indicated by their sculpture. Commerce was thriving even before 3000 B. C. The land appears to have been owned partly by the ruler and partly by the priests and soldiers. The land was worked by tenants, who rented the land; by free laborers, who worked for wages; and by slaves. Unlike the peoples of the Stone Age culture, they used sickles made of any of three materials—stone, baked clay, or copper. Their bread was baked in about the same fashion as the Arabs do it today. The people constructed ovens with domed brick with a fire within, so that the dough could be plastered on the side. Wool and flax were produced in great quantities also. From the flax, linen was made, while the sheep and the goats produced the wool. Very remarkable was the metalwork, not only in copper and silver, but also in gold. The Sumerians also used ivory, fine stone, and precious woods. A great many records of Sumerian businessmen testify to the remarkable height that commerce reached before 3000 B. C. Both men and women signed receipts, accounts, bills, notes, and letters. They were all inscribed on clay tablets, the chief source of knowledge of this early type of civilization. We also learn from these tablets that

money was lent at from 20 to  $33\frac{1}{3}$  per cent interest, as regulated formally by law. So extensive was Sumerian trade that their merchants had agents in places as far away as Asia Minor. These representatives made use of letters of credit. Salesmen traveled from one city to another, for hundreds of miles. Although coinage was not yet employed, commerce was carried on successfully through barter. However, before 3500 B. C. gold and silver were used as mediums of exchange, and there is no doubt much truth in the Biblical record that Abraham bought a cave for which he "weighed out" four hundred shekels of silver. The ratio in value between gold and silver was at that time eight to one. We also have interesting records of a transaction for the payment of a cargo of a ship that sailed from the city of Ur about the year 2100 B. C.

**The Fine Arts and Architecture.** Most of the buildings were constructed of sun-dried brick, but bricks were later baked in kilns. The masses lived in very low houses, with roofs constructed of mud or of reeds. But the homes of the wealthy were rather large, being made up of at least two stories, and constructed around a court. Some of the homes were beautifully furnished, possessing lovely chairs, tables, chests, baskets, vessels of wood, copper, or stone, and beds. Impressive are the remnants of the royal palace in Kish, constructed about the year 3500 B. C. It was built of brick, and provided with huge staircases, large columns, and paneled walls that were decorated with both human and animal figures. The Sumerians before 3000 B.C. knew how to construct not only the vault and the arch, but also the dome. They made use of sewers made of baked brick. Between 3000 and 2000 B. C. a large number of square, pyramidal temple-towers were constructed, called *ziggurats*. They were built upon a raised platform, one terrace being constructed above the other, and each being a little smaller than the one below. Ur also had one of these ziggurats, constructed as usual of sun-dried bricks upon a lower level of baked brick, that was 200 feet long, 150 feet wide, and 70 feet high. (It is interesting to note that the Bible tells of the building of the Tower of Babel, which may well have happened about the year 3000 B. C.) Extraordinary was the skill of the Sumerians in metalwork, wherein their casting was perfect. Furthermore, their sculpture was truly magnificent

In many of their graves have been found delicately carved ornaments and weapons. One of the royal graves dates back to 3200 B. C., and from it has been taken an object made of gold showing hair tied with a fillet, a golden lamb, a dagger, pins, beads, earrings, and bracelets. Beautiful, also, is a silver vase dating from about 3000 B.C., and illuminating is the figure of an eagle with a lion's head above two stags made of copper, its size being nine by seven feet. Some authorities are even of the opinion that two female heads, dating from about 2300 B. C., are almost as perfect as those produced by the greatest Greek masters during the fifth century B. C.

**Literature and Writing.** The Sumerians seem to have been the oldest people that made use of writing. They employed pictographic symbols, but afterwards they changed these symbols into conventional signs which represented syllables. They had about 300 such signs, so it cannot be said that they originated our alphabet. They impressed their writing upon soft clay tablets, making use of a stylus that was provided with a triangular tip. This tip gave to the strokes the shape of a wedge, and for that reason the system of writing was called *cuneiform*, that is, wedge-shaped. In addition to the many thousands of business letters left by the Sumerians, must be mentioned the religious literature. It includes the mythical epic poem describing the Creation, that of the Flood (the Epic of Gilgamesh), and that of a certain shepherd who tried to fly to heaven on the back of an eagle.

**Science.** In the field of science the Sumerians made even greater contributions. They bequeathed to the Babylonians and the Assyrians a system of astronomy and mathematics. They divided the circle into  $6 \times 60$ , that is, 360 parts or degrees. They also divided the day into twelve double hours, each of which was subdivided into thirty minutes, so that one of their minutes was equivalent to four of ours. They used the same system in their weights, for their talent was equal to sixty minas, and each mina was equivalent to sixty shekels.\* The Sumerians also made great progress in calculating the areas of intricate geometrical figures. They divided the year into lunar months of 29 to 30 days each.

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\* These terms later came to refer to money rather than weight.

Each year for that reason was only 354 days long. Occasionally a thirteenth month was added, in order to make the moon year harmonize with the sun year. Much was also accomplished in the field of astrology; that is, an apparent connection was shown between the course of the various planets and the lives of human beings.

**Religion.** As stated previously, the Sumerians originally believed in only one God, but after 3500 B. C. they developed various forms of polytheism. They began to worship a large number of gods, from among whom they transmitted to the later Babylonians their chief god Marduk. The government of Sumeria was really a theocracy, for the ruler was also the chief priest. The other priests were divided into three classes, namely, the singers, the magicians, and the sooth-sayers. From certain omens, such as the flight of birds, they would derive events of the future. The Sumerians had a vague conception of a future life, but do not appear to have believed in a heaven or a hell. They were accustomed to bury each deceased person with his personal objects, in order that the spirit of the dead person would thereby be pleased. It was felt that the spirit not satisfied with the burial would haunt the house and its inmates.

#### ANCIENT BABYLONIA

**Political History.** When shortly after 3000 B. C. the Sumerians began to decline, other peoples made ready to take their place. Among these were the Akkadians, a Semitic people, who had constructed the city of Akkad in the northern section of central Mesopotamia, and were ruled about the year 2700 B. C. by King Sargon I. They intermarried with the Sumerians, and were instructed by them in the art of warfare, agriculture, commerce, industry, science, and religion. Several centuries after the reign of Sargon I another Semitic race called the Amorites began to dominate the inhabitants of Mesopotamia. By making the city of Babylon their capital, they became known as the Babylonians, and their state as Babylonia. The plain in which Babylon was located is known as the Plain of Shinar. Here was constructed a new nation (between 2300 and 2000 B. C.) of great

political power, but one which added practically nothing to the marvelous contributions to civilization made previously by the Sumerians.



**The Reign of Hammurabi (Hammurabi).** This was the sixth king of the Babylonians, who, like the Akkadians, were instructed by the Sumerians. They adopted from the Sumerians their laws, system of writing, literature, art, and learning. Thus it happens that the famous stories of the Creation and the Flood written in Mesopotamia between 3000 and 2000 B. C. are said by some scholars to be Sumerian works and by others Babylonian. The accounts differ from the story told in the Bible by reason

of their polytheistic character and their relatively low moral standards. The same features belong to the famous Code of Hammurapi, who reigned apparently in the twentieth century B. C. This king ruled wisely and collected taxes carefully. He made the Euphrates navigable once more and also improved the calendar. The laws he codified have been so widely discussed in historical literature that they deserve a separate paragraph.

**The Code of Hammurapi.** This collection of laws was inscribed upon a large stone cylinder seal. It contains 282 articles, preceded by a prologue in which Hammurapi recognizes seventeen gods and goddesses. He subscribes to the familiar dictum of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," but unfortunately, he does not apply this retributive principle justly to all classes of people, thereby showing himself much inferior to the Hebrew lawgiver Moses. Hammurapi decrees that if a "man destroy the eye of another man, one shall destroy his eye," but when a wealthy person destroyed the eye of a freedman, the former knew that he would merely have to pay a fine (see Articles 196 and 198). Have not the wealthy persons of later ages known also in advance that they would receive far better treatment than if they were poor? Hammurapi's wealthy subjects must have been pleased with his eighth article, which stated that a thief who could not repay a person from whom he had stolen something should be put to death, but that all others merely repaid more than they had stolen. Very important also is the unfair discrimination made by Hammurapi between employers and servants or slaves. He ordered that if a person destroyed the eye of a man's slave, he would have to pay one-half of his value. On the other hand, Hammurapi's code reveals striking superiority when compared with the political and social customs of other peoples of the ancient world.

**Babylonian Society.** From the Code of Hammurapi we also learn that agriculture, commerce, and industry were carefully regulated by the government. Those persons who failed to cultivate their fields were penalized, while those who neglected to keep the canals and the dikes in proper condition were also punished. Although a large number of persons owned land, much of it was the property of the government and of the nobles and

the priests, exactly as had been the case among the Sumerians. Those who rented the land had to pay for it two-thirds of the crop. All business agreements required written contracts with the signatures of witnesses. Those who borrowed money had to give cattle as security in the place of money. Farmers received liberal treatment, and women enjoyed a relatively favorable position. Slaves were treated reasonably well. They were often set free, and it was stated in the code that a child of a slave and a freedwoman was free. Workmen were restricted by contracts, while the Code carefully prescribed what their wages should be. Between the poor laborers and the nobles and priests there were the men and women who comprised the middle class. Among them were the ordinary businessmen, clerks, teachers, and skilled workers in the industries. The latter were organized into guilds. The Code also recognized monogamy as proper and binding. But in case the wife was ill for a long time the husband was permitted to have another wife or a concubine. The bridegroom presented his bride with a gift, while the bride's father presented the bridegroom with a dowry. In case of divorce, which was permitted, the wife took charge of the children and the husband had to return the dowry. Wives could inherit property on equal terms with the children. They could bequeath their property as they saw fit. Many women participated in the trades and professions, while some of them even served as priestesses, but husbands were permitted to sell both wives and children for debts.

**Babylonian Religion.** The Babylonians resembled the Sumerians in that they were polytheistic and regarded their gods merely as supermen. The gods were believed to share with human beings their passions and many of their ordinary habits of life. Sacrifices were given, not in order to insure for oneself a better future in the life beyond the grave, but only to derive advantages for this life. The temples were the property of the state, and were instituted not merely as places of worship, but often as banks and business establishments. Many were the magicians and diviners who thought they could foretell the future by studying the liver of a sheep slain in sacrifice. Schools were conducted as were those among the Sumerians, with the pupils using the clay tablets in much the way that ours use paper tablets.

**ANCIENT ASSYRIA**

**The City-State of Assur.** About the year 3000 B. C. a Semitic people constructed a new state called Assur (Ashur), from which name the word "Assyria" has been derived. This was a city-state located in northeastern Mesopotamia, on the banks of the Tigris River. It retained its independence for perhaps six or eight centuries until Babylonia grew so powerful that it annexed Assyria (*ca.* 2100 B. C.). Affected no doubt by the highly civilized Sumerians, the Assyrians long before the reign of Hammurapi possessed advanced political institutions and a flourishing commerce and industry. They traded with the inhabitants of Asia Minor and Syria. Large numbers of cuneiform records indicate how extensive their commerce was. They made use of small silver bars which carried stamps indicating their respective weights. These bars were used in preference to barter, but letters of credit in the form of clay tablets were also extensively employed. On one of these tablets it is clearly stated that Assyrians used to lend money to peoples in Asia Minor at the rate of from 20 to 30 per cent. It is not surprising that money was first used in Asia Minor, where the early Assyrian merchants had been so active ages before.

**The Kassites Conquer and Rule Mesopotamia.** About the year 1785 B. C. a tribe of invaders called the Kassites conquered Babylonia from the north and afterwards extended their rule over other sections of Mesopotamia. Under Babylonian domination the Assyrians had continued their lucrative trade with districts to the north and northwest, but it seems that the Kassites did not appreciate a high degree of civilized life. For several hundred years after 1785 B. C. Assyria declined together with Babylonia.

**The Hittites.** One of the most mysterious and at the same time one of the most powerful peoples of the ancient world were the Hittites, who inhabited Asia Minor and northern Syria. About the year 2000 B. C. they were the dominant people in eastern Asia Minor, and in 1750 B. C. they invaded even southern Mesopotamia and sacked the city of Babylon. Although during the sixteenth century B. C. they temporarily lost their political power, shortly after 1500 B. C. they created an empire in Asia Minor and extended their sway over the regions to the south-



east. Thus they were able to hold in check the Assyrians, who were bent upon conquest again. These Hittites were not Semites, nor do they seem to have been closely related to such peoples as the Sumerians or Egyptians. Their language was Indo-European in relationship, as is the Persian language. Originally the Hittites seem to have inhabited the plains to the north of the Black and Caspian seas. They resembled the Kassites. The Hittites were ruled by a king, whose power was not nearly so great as that of the Babylonian or Sumerian king. Their military organization was so highly developed that they were able to hold the Assyrians long in check. From the peoples of Mesopotamia they borrowed the cuneiform script. Some of their records show that they used to make treaties with the rulers of Egypt. They seem to be the first people in the ancient world who developed the iron industry, and it was from them that the Assyrians learned to use iron in the manufacture of weapons. Before 1500 B. C. the Assyrians had been dependent upon a copper supply, but copper was not nearly so hard and durable as iron. The Assyrians also acquired from the Hittites an interesting style of architecture used in the construction of royal palaces. These were built of brick and stone, and had a porch provided with numerous columns flanked by two square towers. On each side of the entrance was a huge stone figure of a lion, while the porch was also decorated with sculptures in relief.

**Subsequent History.** From 1785 to 1169 B. C. Mesopotamia was largely dominated by the Kassites. But during the twelfth century B. C. the Assyrians were favored by a number of circumstances which enabled them not only to secure complete independence, but also to build an empire of their own. At that time the power of the Hittites and of the Egyptians was declining, and that of the Kassites was easily overthrown. Consequently, the Assyrians, with their improved arms and renewed ambitions, conquered the whole of Mesopotamia and northern Syria. During the next four centuries they also extended their sway over the region directly to the north of Mesopotamia, while during the seventh century B. C. they ruled even Egypt for a short time. From about 750 B. C. to 612 B. C. Assyria was the greatest power in the ancient Near East. This empire and its civilization will be discussed in a subsequent chapter.

## *Significant Dates*

Union of Upper and Lower Egypt . . . . .	3000 B.C.
Invention of Egyptian Calendar . . . . .	2776 B.C.
The Hyksos Conquer Egypt . . . . .	1750 B.C.
The Empire . . . . .	1600-1200 B.C.
The Assyrians Conquer Egypt . . . . .	672 B.C.
Egypt Annexed by Persians . . . . .	525 B.C.

### CHAPTER III.

## ANCIENT EGYPT

Egypt is a land of romance and mystery which, unlike ancient Mesopotamia, was seldom disturbed by invasions and foreign wars during the period from 3400 to 1700 B. C. It was the first country in the ancient world to bring about political unity and thus become a great state. Besides, no other country in the ancient Near East enjoyed so long a period of union and independence as did Egypt. Here were constructed the famous pyramids, sphinxes, and obelisks, which form the delight of all tourists to-day. Egypt was also a commercial country of the greatest importance, and its scientists were able to surpass others in some branches of mathematics, while they also were the first to perfect a solar calendar.

### POLITICAL HISTORY

**The Land.** Egypt was practically nothing else but the Nile River and its valley. The Nile has its sources in east central Africa, in Ethiopia, or Abyssinia. The valley of the Nile River has an average width of about ten miles, but the width varies from six or eight to thirty miles. The total area is about ten

thousand square miles. On each side of the valley there extend desert plateaus, except near the mouth of the river, where it enters the Mediterranean Sea in the north. Here the valley broadens into a delta, with an area of about 350 square miles. At the southern border of Egypt is the so-called First Cataract (waterfall). From this point to the coast of the Mediterranean Sea the length of the Nile Valley is about 650 miles. As a result of the abundance of spring rains in the higher regions to the south and of the melting of the snow in Abyssinia, the river rises rapidly in the month of May and continues to rise until early October, when it reaches its greatest height, that is, from twenty to forty feet above the normal level. During the first week of November the waters begin to recede, and in January the river level is once more back to normal.

**The People.** Although the inhabitants of ancient Egypt were, strictly speaking, not Semites, they were closely related to the inhabitants of northern Arabia, Mesopotamia, and Syria. From the paintings and statues left by the Egyptian artists of the period before 2500 B. C. we gather that the Egyptians possessed deep-set eyes, large cheek bones, fairly thick lips, and a comparatively short nose. Their hair seems to have been always black and straight. Their skin had been white, but powerful rays of the sun quickly turned the color to tan.

**The Union of Upper and Lower Egypt.** Before 3000 B. C. there seem to have been two kingdoms in Egypt, the southern half or Upper Egypt, and the northern half or Lower Egypt. Little is known about Egyptian history before their union, which occurred between 3400 B. C. and 3000 B. C. For many centuries a Stone Age culture flourished in Egypt, but it is difficult to determine its dates. It may be that side by side with highly civilized areas there were others in which there existed little civilized life. It may also be that civilization was preceded or sometimes followed by a Stone Age culture. At any rate, there can be no question about the numerous remains of the Stone Age civilization in Egypt.

**The Dynasties.** According to an Egyptian historian called Manetho, who wrote in Greek, the rulers of Egypt were divided into thirty groups, or Thirty Dynasties, the first "Lord of the

Two Lands" being King Menes. The last ruler in the long list that Manetho prepared was Alexander the Great, who conquered Egypt about the year 330 B. C. Menes seems to have ruled shortly before the year 3000 B. C., while other important rulers were Khufu (Cheops), who belonged to the IVth Dynasty and reigned about the year 2850 B. C.; Amenembet III, whose reign occurred from about 1938-1903 B. C.; Amenhotep III, who ruled from 1411-1375 B. C.; Tutankhamon, whose magnificent tomb was discovered in recent years; and Ramescs II. who ruled from about 1292-1225 B. C. Rameses II belonged to the XIXth Dynasty and was one of the strongest kings in the history of Egypt. He was followed by a long list of weak rulers, but after Assyria had conquered Egypt in 672 B. C., two important kings, Psamtik I and Necho, who belonged to the XXVIth Dynasty, set Egypt free again.

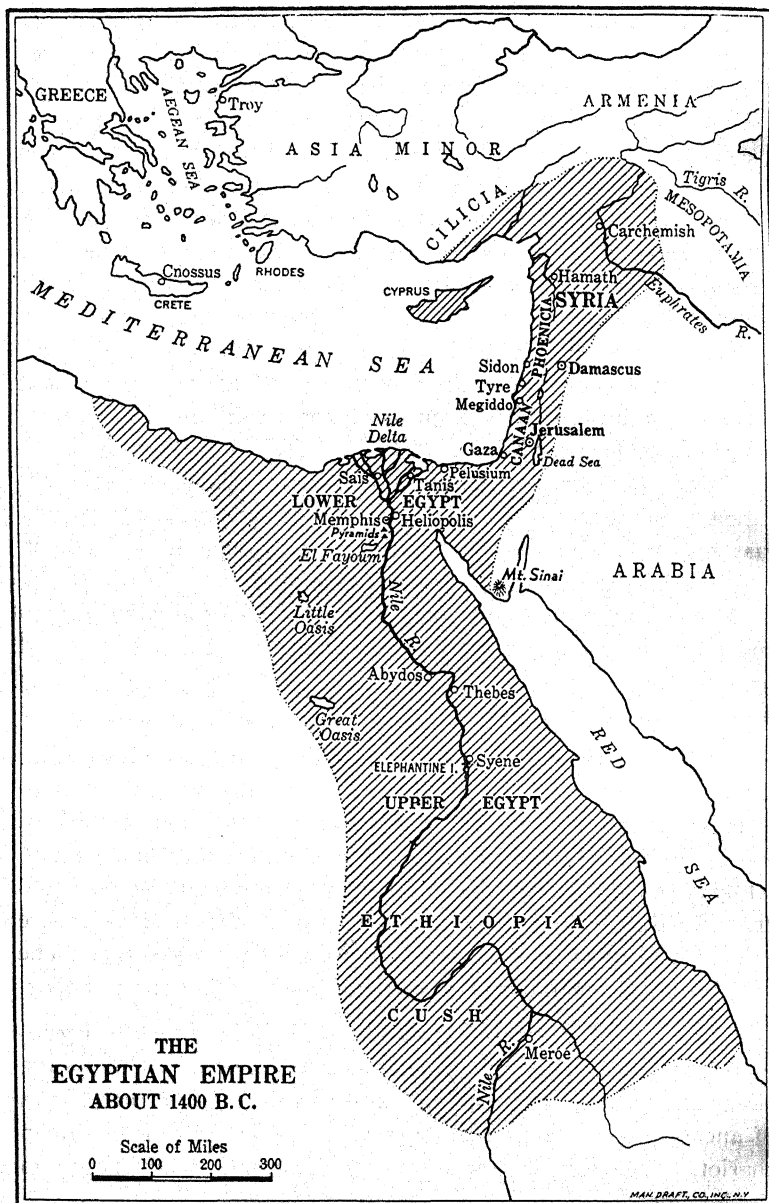
**The Old Kingdom and the Middle Kingdom.** The Egyptians reached their highest level of civilization in the period from 2740 to 2270 B. C., that is, the Age of the Old Kingdom. In this time the greatest of the pyramids was constructed, and the arts and sciences flourished. Egypt was ruled by a king whose title was Pharaoh. He wielded autocratic power, and was believed to be descended from the gods. He was regarded both a god and a king. Although he cannot be said to have been responsible to the people, nevertheless, as king and as god, it was his duty to take the best care of them. He was responsible to his ancestors, whom he had to worship and who were his protectors, and to the gods above. He appointed both the civil officials and the priests. He was head of both the church and the state, one might say. Consequently, the government of Egypt was a theocracy. But it must be noted that the king as a civil ruler was really above all priests in more than one way. He was in charge of the irrigation works which were necessary to conduct the waters of the Nile River and its silt to all parts of the valley. The land belonged to him alone, and those who cultivated it were obliged to pay rent to him in the form of crops. As a rule they had to give to him one-fifth of what they produced. In addition to those payments, the tenants were also obliged to render personal services, some military service, work of a public nature such as irrigation labor, and other duties.

**The Coming of the Hyksos.** For centuries peace was maintained in all parts of Egypt, but the time came at last when the king was weakened by the rivalry of his leading ministers. He had to depend upon a large number of officials placed under the charge of the chief minister, or vizier. In the various provinces ruled governors whose titles eventually became hereditary. Thus a new class of nobles was born who shared with the king his royal prerogatives. A feudal aristocracy was also developed and among the priests a similar process took place. The priests finally usurped a great many of the civil offices. Since they also were in charge of religious functions of the state government and wielded great power over the people in that capacity as religious leaders and healers, they acquired great wealth in the form of land and other possessions. Between 2000 and 1800 B. C. the high priests of the god Amon of the city of Thebes in southern Egypt ruled there as real pharaohs. Thus it became a relatively easy matter for invaders to overthrow the Egyptian government, which overthrow actually occurred about the year 1750 B. C., when an Asiatic people by the name of *Hyksos* invaded Egypt and ruled the country for about two hundred years.

**The Empire.** But the Hyksos were also in time overthrown, and now the Egyptians for the first time exhibited imperialistic ambitions. They staged a national revolt, and expelled the Hyksos from their soil. They then invaded western parts of Asia, conquered Syria, and finally reached the Euphrates River. From about 1550 to 1250 B. C. they maintained this new empire. Although they did not develop an efficient imperial form of government, they were fortunate in having a number of loyal native princes who ruled as governors under Egyptian sovereignty. The Egyptians also maintained strong garrisons at important points.

**The Art of Warfare.** Under the Old Kingdom the Egyptian army consisted of militia levies that were armed with spears, bows and arrows, daggers, and leather shields. From the peoples of ancient Mesopotamia they borrowed the idea of a horse-drawn chariot. They also improved their spears, and finally began to employ mercenary soldiers.

**The Period of Decline.** During the thirteenth and twelfth centuries B. C. a long period of decline set in which finally cul-



minated in the permanent annexation of Egypt by the Persians. In 730 B. C. Egypt was conquered by Ethiopia, while in 672 B. C. Assyria invaded and conquered the land. Then followed a short period of independence which was terminated by the Persian annexation in the year 525 B. C. About two hundred years later Alexander the Great conquered Egypt, while the Romans annexed Egypt during the first century B. C. At no time since the Persian conquest of 525 B. C. has Egypt led the world in important branches of human thought or enterprise.

### AGRICULTURE, COMMERCE, AND INDUSTRY

**The Development of Agriculture.** For many centuries the annual floods of the Nile River determined the economic life of the Egyptians. Egypt was at all times an agrarian country, for the vast majority of Egyptians were employed in agriculture, either directly or indirectly. Agriculture was indeed the chief basis of prosperity. The fields were cultivated from November until May. The crops rapidly grew to maturity and were harvested. Principal grain crops were wheat and barley, and vegetables grown were the radish, bean, pea, lettuce, cucumber, and leek. There were also numerous vineyards and olive trees as well as date palms. Flax and cotton made possible the manufacture of linen and cotton goods. Oxen and donkeys were used as domestic animals. Rather primitive was the plough since it was a wooden implement, drawn by oxen and occasionally, when the soil was easily broken up, by the peasants. There were also sheep and goats, together with ducks, geese, swans, and doves. In a later period the chicken was introduced from India. Not long before the opening of our era the camel likewise was introduced, but before that time the donkey had been used for carrying burdens.

**Industry.** Since the Egyptians were able to grow more crops than they used themselves, they were in a position to exchange the surplus for copper mined in northern Arabia and on the island of Cyprus. They also imported wood from Syria, spices and incense from India and adjoining countries, and afterwards iron from Asia Minor. Both stone and brick were used for building purposes. Wooden boats were constructed at a relatively early date, as soon as the Egyptians found it desirable to extend their

shipping from local areas to the coast of the northern Mediterranean and Indian Ocean. They ventured also into the Aegean Sea, where they taught the natives many elements of their superior culture. Frequently they exchanged raw materials for beautiful metalwork. The Egyptian craftsmen showed great artistic skill in dyeing linen cloth and in manufacturing glassware and pottery. They also produced exquisite figures in copper and bronze, while their furniture likewise testified to their extraordinary skill.

### ARTS AND LITERATURE

**Painting and Sculpture.** The paintings of the Egyptians are remarkable for their accuracy. Although little distinction was drawn between light and shadow, and although very little or no attention was paid to perspective, the decorations upon the walls of the temples and other large buildings, portraying human and animal life, as well as lovely landscape scenery, show that the artists were endowed with a fertile imagination and were skillful in the employment of symbolism. They seem to have known a great deal about psychology and were given to religious and philosophical speculation. Lovely statues of kings and sacred animals were carved out of stone and wood, while bronze figures were also produced in abundance. Some of the stone figures were so huge as to weigh more than two million pounds each. Among the wonders of the ancient world may be reckoned the obelisks and the sphinxes.

**Architecture.** Even more impressive than the sculpture and the painting is the architecture of ancient Egypt. Constructed at Karnak is the magnificent temple of Amon, which contains huge stone blocks weighing eleven thousand pounds each. They were beautifully carved in the form of round cylinders and carefully piled on top of one another to form pillars. How the Egyptian architects and artists were able to transport such huge blocks of stone is still a mystery. They must have possessed engineering methods which perished with them.

**The Pyramids.** The greatest of the pyramids is the Great Pyramid of Cheops of Khufu, at Gizeh near Cairo. It was built in the reign of the pharaoh called Khufu, or Cheops, and the date is about 2500 B. C. It is the greatest monument of ancient Egypt.



Each side at the bottom is 755 feet long, while the height of the monument is 481 feet. It contains about two and a half million blocks of stone so carefully put together that perfection in measurements was reached within one ten-thousandth part of the length of each side. The joints between the blocks had a width of only one-thousandth part of an inch. Such was the skill of the ancient engineers of Egypt in 2500 B. C. that they could place blocks of five thousand pounds each having the sides cut with such minute care as to "equal the opticians' work of today," as one scholar has recently stated.

**Literature and Writing.** The Egyptians developed two chief forms of writing, the first of which is called *hieroglyphics*, meaning that they inscribed sacred characters upon stone, while the second form was called *hieratic*, or *demotic* (running script) for that was written with a pen made of reed on a piece of papyrus made out of the pith of a plant called papyrus. From this word "papyrus" our word "paper" is derived. The Egyptians did not at first use an alphabet such as we know today, but employed pictures, each of which had a definite meaning and also a definite sound. These sounds were only consonant sounds, for vowel sounds were not yet written down by them. For example, the picture of two arms raised up represented a soul or spirit, and also the sound *ka*. Egyptian literature consisted in historical novels, public records and annals, collections of fables and proverbs, love songs, that is, lyric poetry, and religious and philosophical treatises. The most important religious work is entitled *The Book of the Dead*.

#### SOCIAL CLASSES AND RELIGION

**The Social Classes.** In the opinion of the pharaoh, all persons were so far below him that they seemed to be equal. But naturally in a society which depended upon agriculture, commerce, and industry, it was impossible to maintain political and social equality. The nobles and the priests, as we saw, tended to increase both in number and in power. Three classes of people could easily be distinguished from one another. The upper classes were formed by the nobles and the priests. The middle class, as in ancient Sumeria and Babylonia, was made up of members of the

professions, businessmen, and owners of industrial establishments. The masses constituted the serfs, that is, those bound to the soil and restricted in their liberties, but not as low as slaves. Nevertheless, the burdens of the serfs were so heavy and their liberties so restricted that many scholars have classified them among the slaves of antiquity. The important fact remains that their labor made possible the existence of a class of people having the necessary leisure to devote to the arts and the sciences. A real caste system did not exist in Egypt, for it was possible at all times to rise from one class to the other. It seems that the serfs as a special class belonged, as a rule, to the pharaoh. Slaves may have been employed at all times, but it is apparent that during the course of three or four thousand years one class would merge from time to time into the other.

**The Position of Women.** Women occupied an unusually favorable position in Egypt, enjoying unique privileges that were not known elsewhere until very recent times. Not only did women own property in their own name and right, but also only through the mother could property be inherited. It was also a common custom for queens to rule the country. Queens could even transmit to their children the right of kingship. One of the most important queens was Hatsheput.

**Egyptian Religion.** The religion of ancient Egypt was a mixture of other religions, some based largely upon those of native growth, while others upon those of foreign origin. The Egyptians believed in spirits, including those of human beings who had entered the realm of the dead. For the benefit of the spirit of a deceased person his body was carefully preserved (mummification). This would permit his spirit (*Ka*) to remain in the body for a long period of time. Somehow this art of mummification was lost to posterity. As a rule the mummy was placed in a beautiful tomb, where the *Ka* could be provided with various articles, including furniture and even the use of servants. As a matter of fact, the pyramids were no more and no less than huge tombs erected for the pharaohs. The Egyptians were of the opinion that a good life upon earth would be rewarded with happiness in the life hereafter. The souls of the deceased persons would enter the hall of the god Osiris, who was the ruler of the dead.

Other gods were Ra, the Sun God, and Isis (a goddess). The Egyptians worshipped natural forces and also showed respect and reverence for sacred animals, such as the crocodile, the cat, and the bull. Such animals were kept in the temples where they were given almost as much reverence as the god himself. Various local districts had their own special gods. But some gods began to acquire national importance, which was the case, for example, with Amon of Thebes. For a short time Egypt was ruled by a remarkable pharaoh, called Ikhnaton, who believed in monotheism, and endeavored fanatically to enforce his religion upon his country. But monotheism was not supported by the masses.

### EGYPTIAN CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE MAKING OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION

**The Beginnings of the Alphabet.** Reference has already been made to the system of writing developed by the Egyptians. Now it remains to show how their system affected later peoples. Originally, Egyptian writing was only pictorial, and as such it was of no great historical importance. About 600 pictures were used, and many of them could be employed to represent more than one object. But in the course of some centuries each picture came to stand for some definite object and idea. A sign was used for a syllable, and the syllables were combined to represent words. Eventually the picture signs were intended no longer to convey to the reader the original object shown by the picture, but merely the syllable or the sound. In this manner the phonetic writing was created. Somewhere between 3000 and 2700 B. C. twenty-four definite signs were developed, each of which typified a real sound, though it was only a consonant. These twenty-four consonant sounds represent the earliest alphabet developed in the ancient world. Although most of the Egyptian writers refused to make use of this convenient script, and clung to the pictures of former ages, the original alphabet had been made and was imitated subsequently by other peoples.

**Writing Materials.** In addition to the invention of paper and pen, the Egyptians made use of ink that was manufactured from water, carbon, and gums,

**Decipherment of Ancient Egyptian Writings.** Until the end of the eighteenth century European scholars were unable to decipher the hieroglyphics of ancient Egypt. In Egypt itself the ability to read those hieroglyphics was no longer possible after 300 B. C. But it seems that a number of priests who possessed many secrets concerning mummification, the art of healing, and the mysteries of the spirit world, still knew how to decipher this ancestral script. The public at large no longer understood the symbols of old. But it so happened that a slab of black basalt, bearing a trilingual inscription, was found in 1799 by one of Napoleon's soldiers and supplied Champollion with the first clue for deciphering hieroglyphics. The Rosetta stone, so-called after the town Rosetta in Egypt where it was found, is now in the British Museum in London. On this stone there had been inscribed in three different languages—Greek, hieroglyphics, and hieratic—the decree of a ruler, dated 196 B. C. Thus scholars were able to decipher and translate the ancient symbols of Egyptian writing. Unfortunately, however, the scholars that Napoleon had taken to Egypt with him were not able to do this work, since most of them were interested chiefly in the natural sciences. But in 1822 a French historian named Champollion made a careful study of an obelisk upon which were inscribed royal names in both Greek and Egyptian letters. He saw that the Egyptians had made use of a real alphabet and of the twenty-four consonant sounds he learned twelve. Thus, with the use of the Rosetta Stone other scholars began to decipher the writings upon the walls of the temples and upon obelisks.

**Influence of the Egyptian Alphabet.** In recent years archeologists have demonstrated that on the Sinai Peninsula and in southern Palestine alphabetic writing was known during the nineteenth century B. C. This was an imitation of the Egyptian alphabet. The Hebrews appear to have used an alphabet of twenty-one consonant sounds before the fifteenth century B. C. They probably passed their knowledge of the alphabet on to the Phoenicians, who in turn transmitted it to the Greeks. It was the Greeks who added the sounds of vowels to make the complete alphabet, as will appear.

**Reform of the Calendar.** In 2776 B. C. the Egyptians perfected the solar calendar, establishing the calendar year of 365 days. This year consisted of twelve months of thirty days each, to which five days were added at the end of the twelfth month. This was a much more satisfactory calendar than that employed by the inhabitants of ancient Mesopotamia. Since the calendar year of the Egyptians was one-fourth of a day too short, scholars afterwards found it necessary to improve this calendar, but nothing definite was done in this direction until the time of Julius Caesar about 50 B. C. But even this reform was not entirely satisfactory to European scholars, so that in the year 1582, the final form was introduced, the one which has been accepted since that time by all European peoples. The Egyptians, in measuring the time of day and night, invented the sun dial and water clock. Unlike the ancient Babylonians and their descendants, the Egyptians were not interested in astrology.

**Mathematical Discoveries.** Since Egyptian engineers had to measure the irrigated lands and the courses of ditches and canals at a very early time they became interested in geometry. They calculated the cubic contents of silos that were erected on a circular base and made other mathematical computations for practical purposes. Their unit for numbers was ten (decimal system).

**Medicine.** During the Old Kingdom great progress was made in medicine. Much was known about anatomy and mummification. In the temples great medical schools were maintained. A careful study was made of all the diseases known in the ancient Near East, and these were catalogued, differentiated, and classified according to their symptoms. But, unfortunately, too much attention was paid to magic instead of to scientific diagnosis. Excellent work was done in bone surgery and in the study of the blood. It was well known that the heart was the center of the circulatory system of the blood. In the treatment of wounds much progress was also made. Salt solutions were used for disinfecting, and alkaline applications were employed in treating physical injuries. Many of the discoveries in mathematics and medicine were

passed on by the Egyptians to the Greeks. The same may be said, as the famous Greek historian Herodotus testified, for the religion of the Egyptians.

**Influence Exerted Through the Hebrews.** As is well known, a number of Hebrew tribes lived in Egypt during the course of several centuries. Among them lived the learned Moses, who had been instructed at the court of an Egyptian princess during the fifteenth century B. C. From time to time a number of Israelites left Egypt and moved to Palestine. The greatest migration occurred under the leadership of Moses, as is carefully discussed in the opening books of the Bible. The language of the ancient Hebrews was undoubtedly affected to a great extent by that of the ancient Egyptians. Furthermore, the conception of God as a dual personality, and of heaven as a double heaven, the Hebrews must have derived from the Egyptians. Although the Egyptian laws are not known to scholars at the present time, there can be no doubt that the famous law of Moses owed more to the Egyptian laws than to those of Hammurapi. During the Middle Ages and in early modern times it was customary for leaders in the Christian Church to refer to the experiences of the Hebrews in Egypt. Martin Luther, for example, first great leader among the Protestants, said in some of his writings that political and social institutions should be modeled after conditions that prevailed in Egypt during the stay there of the Hebrews. He thought that an excellent way of paying taxes, rents, and interest on borrowed money was to give from one-tenth to one-fifth of the proceeds from land and business to the state in the form of taxes. He referred specifically to the experience of Joseph and the Israelites and the Egyptians who were ruled by him.

**Influence Exerted Through the Cretans and the Greeks.** The superb architecture, sculpture, and painting of the Egyptians; their highly developed commerce, which extended far into the Aegean Sea; the marvelous manner in which they controlled the course of the Nile, which called forth the admiration of Herodotus and other Greek writers; the conception of a number of gods worshipped by the Egyptians and taken over bodily by the

Greeks; the rôle played by the priesthood in Egypt and the wealth of religious and philosophical and scientific knowledge possessed by the priests and maintained by them for three or four thousand years; the extraordinary knowledge of the human body, which could not fail to attract the attention of Greek scholars; and the numerous discoveries made by the Egyptians in the fields of mathematics and the natural sciences, many of which were not recorded by history—these gifts bequeathed by Egyptian civilization to the lands immediately to the north of them, that is, to the island of Crete, the islands of the Aegean Sea, and the mainland of Asia Minor and the Balkan peninsula, were passed on by the highly civilized Cretans and Greeks to the Romans, and by the Romans in turn to the peoples of the medieval and modern world.

**The Object Lesson of Ancient Egypt.** Ancient Egypt witnessed a phenomenon which exactly duplicated that seen in ancient Mesopotamia. In the latter region the Sumerians from 4000 to 3000 B. C. developed a higher type of civilization than the countries of Mesopotamia knew perhaps until the seventh or sixth century B. C. The same thing happened in ancient Egypt, for almost all the important discoveries made in the fields of science and the arts were achieved during the period of the Old Kingdom, that is, before 2700 B. C. All that later generations of Egyptians could do apparently was to hand down the great gifts of their highly skilled ancestors. These two remarkable phenomena displayed in Mesopotamia and Egypt seem to prove that at one time, that is, between 4000 and 2700 B. C., human beings developed an extraordinarily high level of culture. Much of this knowledge was of a mysterious type and was not recorded upon stone or papyrus or tablet. Even that which is now known to scholars is of such a nature that everybody recognizes a marked superiority of the Egyptians of the Old Kingdom and of the ancient Sumerians over their successors for a period of more than two thousand years.\* There can be no question that from 4000 to 3000 B. C. unique contributions were made by the Sumerians and the

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\* All this appears to negate the application of the evolutionary theory of mankind. For the historian, consequently, the safest course is to observe the laws of growth and of decay.

Egyptians, some of which were entirely lost by posterity, while others were with great difficulty preserved. It was not until the Golden Age of Greek civilization in the fifth century B. C. that another people arose to equal and, in some respects, to surpass the Sumerians and Egyptians of old. But even these Greeks of the fifth century B. C. received and frankly acknowledged a great many gifts from both Egypt and Mesopotamia.



## *Significant Dates*

Division of Hebrew Kingdom 940 B.C.

Fall of Aramaean Kingdom 732 B.C.

Fall of Kingdom of Israel . 722 B.C.

Fall of Kingdom of Judah . 586 B.C.

### CHAPTER IV.

## THE HEBREWS, THE ARAMAEANS, AND THE PHOENICIANS

Among the peoples of the ancient world the Hebrews did not occupy a prominent position, for they were but a small nation. They possessed few great cities with magnificent temples and palaces in their little country. Nevertheless, they contributed a large share of the making of western civilization. Their religion and their literature, as well as their code of laws, were so superior to all similar gifts bequeathed by the ancient Near East that they certainly deserve detailed study.

### EARLY HISTORY OF THE HEBREWS

**Abraham in the City of Ur.** According to the Bible story, Abraham was the progenitor of the Hebrew race, which is the only race dating back to the ancient world that has retained its existence and characteristics until this day. There was a time, not long ago, that Abraham was looked upon by scholars as a legendary character, while his native city, Ur, seemed but an empty name. Its location was unknown until 1924. For was it not assumed for decades that civilization gradually blossomed forth until about 2000 B. C. when Mesopotamia had a culture worth

noting? Now we know that when Abraham lived in Ur, the city was but a ghost of its former self. On the site of Ur there has recently been unearthed lovely painted pottery which dates from about 3000 B. C., that is, 800 years before Abraham was born.

**Abraham's Position in Society.** Another remarkable fact is Abraham's position as the owner of flocks. He was once supposed to be but a mere nomad, wandering from place to place in search of food for his cattle. The spades of the industrious excavators have revealed, however, that when Abraham issued forth from Ur about 2150 B. C., in order to settle in Palestine, persons in his position were highly honored by kings and princes. As one authority observes, such persons as Abraham "were princely rulers, who hired out their flocks and their shepherds, and ruled over their properties."

**The Geography of Canaan.** Canaan was the name of the country which Abraham visited. Later it was called Palestine, after the Philistines, who are mentioned so often in the Bible. In Abraham's time Canaan was but thinly populated, and, as in the time of Jacob, it was not always able to provide its inhabitants with sufficient food. Abraham was obliged at one time to go to Egypt to buy food. There is no doubt that Canaan was in touch with both Mesopotamia and Egypt. But the country differed considerably from the lowlands of Egypt and Babylonia. The climate was not so hot and dry. Unfortunately, much of the soil was mountainous and rocky, and only in the spring and late summer were the rains abundant. However, valleys were to be found in various parts, and pasture lands were upon the whole excellent.

**The Ancient Hebrews.** Here Abraham and his descendants lived with their flocks. They learned also to cultivate the soil. As the population increased, some of Abraham's descendants became actively interested in commerce and industry, but it may be said that throughout the long history of the Hebrew nation only a small proportion of the people lived in the towns. As long as the Hebrews remained in their native land, they were noted as a pastoral people. Many of them, however, cultivated the fields, grew olive and fig trees, and produced grain crops.

## THE RISE AND FALL OF THE HEBREW KINGDOM

**The Government.** Until about the year 1025 B. C. the government of the Hebrews may be described as a theocracy, that is, a rule of a people by the church or a priesthood. First under Moses, then under the judges, and finally under the prophets, the Israelites or Hebrews were firmly held together, though they were divided into twelve tribes. Under King Saul, who ruled about the year 1020 B. C., the Hebrews became a united nation. Saul, however, was barely able to defend the country against the Philistines to the southwest.

**David and Solomon.** But it was his successor, King David, who enlarged the nation far beyond its earlier borders, so that it now included a comparatively large district east of the Jordan River, and the region stretching to the north of the Sea of Galilee. David conquered the city of Jerusalem and made it the national capital. Under David's son, Solomon, the country reached its greatest prosperity, but, owing to the heavy taxation and other burdens levied upon the people by their ambitious king, many of his subjects became disappointed with his rule, and several leaders wished that they had never asked for a monarch but had remained under the rule of God and his priesthood. On the death of Solomon about the year 940 B. C., the kingdom was divided into two parts: the north was called Israel, and the south Judah.

**Fall of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah.** These two kingdoms were ruled by separate monarchs, until in 722 B. C. the Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom with its capital, Samaria, and carried off a large proportion of the inhabitants to Mesopotamia. Those who are familiar with the record of the history of Israel as presented in the Bible will understand why the kingdom was destroyed so soon. They also will recall the wretched fate of the southern kingdom, which, after having been ruled by several wicked kings, fell in 586 B. C. before the army of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylonia. Once more a large number of Hebrews were deported to Mesopotamia, but fifty years later, in 536 B. C., when a Persian king ruled over Babylonia, the Hebrews living there were permitted to return to Palestine. Some did so forthwith, but a large number of them chose

to remain, and their descendants spread over various lands of the ancient world, including Egypt. After the destruction of the two Hebrew kingdoms just mentioned, the Hebrews were generally called the Jews.

**The Lost Tribes of Israel.** Since so many of them remained outside of Palestine, the sources in several countries speak of the "lost tribes of Israel." And one day when Jesus of Nazareth had preached a powerful sermon and had talked about taking His departure, some people wondered whether He was going to preach to the lost tribes of Israel.

**Many Jews Become Businessmen.** Not all the Jews remained herdsmen or farmers. Many of them became talented businessmen, bankers, or scholars. Since their laws did not permit them to make loans at interest to their own people but allowed them to charge interest to Gentiles, they were encouraged to transact business with foreigners and to lend their money freely to them. Furthermore, the Christian nations of the Middle Ages did not favor the loaning of money at interest by Christians, because of the laws of the Hebrews, which they had accepted as binding upon themselves. Consequently, it became customary for Christians to borrow money from the Jews, and so it happened naturally that the Jews became the leading bankers in some European countries. Since they were often persecuted and excluded from many crafts and professions, they tended to band together and support each other.

**The Hebrews Who Remained in Palestine.** The Hebrews who continued to live in Palestine never acquired great material wealth. For one thing, the country was very small, only about ten thousand square miles in area. And, as we observed, much of the soil was very poor. During the long summers there was seldom enough rain. Minerals and forests were also lacking. When King Solomon desired to build a great temple in honor of Jehova, he was obliged to fetch the lumber from regions to the north and metal from countries to the south. He even had to employ foreign architects and workmen, and when he had finished the structure, it was but a mediocre building compared with the huge temples of Mesopotamia and the vast structures of Egypt.

### THE HERITAGE OF ISRAEL

**Literary Contributions.** The Hebrews made greater contributions to the development of western civilization than did some of the large empires, such as Assyria, for example. Though they failed to produce great mathematicians, sculptors, painters, and scientists, they more than made up for this apparent neglect by giving to the western world their superb literature, their enlightened code of laws, and their unique religion. The Old Testament contains possibly the oldest history of the human race up to the time of Abraham. Moreover, the prophetic and the poetical books show an overwhelming superiority over all similar productions of the ancient world, including India and China. There is certainly nothing in the literature of Egypt and Babylonia that can at all be compared with the book of Psalms and the prophetic books by Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

**The Code of Moses.** Even the celebrated code of Hammurapi is but a simple and crude document when studied side by side with the much more extensive code of Moses found in the first five books of the Old Testament. Although Hammurapi's code is about six hundred years older than that of Moses, there is no need of drawing the conclusion that for this reason Moses must have copied the older code, but there are many parallels. Possibly both codes had a common Semitic source, for they repeat certain older laws and theories, such as that of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." If a person knocked out a tooth in the mouth of another person, he would have to forfeit one of his teeth, as we have already seen. But the peculiarity of Hammurapi's code is that this was required only if a person of prestige had lost his tooth. In case a wealthy man knocked out several teeth of a poorer person, he merely paid a small fine.

**Hebrew Laws Are Superior.** The code of Moses places a comparatively high value on human life and requires kind treatment of slaves. It demands proper care of the poor and of strangers, something neglected by the Babylonians. The code of Moses required that witchcraft and idolatrous sacrifices be punishable by death, but the Babylonian lawgivers thought

such practices were not wrong. The reason for the difference is simple. The Hebrews were expected to trust in God and His prophets, who would tell them all they had to know. There was no need to resort to mediums and ask questions of spirits of departed persons. Thus we read in the first book of Samuel that when King Saul refused to listen to Samuel any longer and God would not tell him anything worth his while in dreams, and when he went to see a "witch," that is, in this case a medium, he committed a serious crime.

**The Hebrew Religion.** The Hebrews had a unique religion in that they as a whole nation were obliged to worship only one God. There were other peoples in antiquity among whom monotheism was practiced by a few individuals, and in Egypt Ikhnaton had tried to enforce monotheism in the country, but such cases were exceptional. The Hebrews alone had a God who was not like human beings, but a spiritual force. True, Moses was once asked by God to view His glory in physical form, but we are not informed that God had a body like that of human beings. The Hebrews alone were prohibited from considering their kings as more than purely mortal beings in their capacity as rulers, and as descendants of the gods. Even the Romans, as we shall see, came to worship their emperors. At the beginning, before the Flood, monotheism was not often practised in the ancient world.

**The Influence of This Religion.** Through the influence of the Christian religion the thoughts of the Hebrew prophets, judges, and singers were made known to all the western nations of modern times. The literature of England, Germany, France, Spain, and Italy cannot always be understood without a knowledge of the Old Testament. Indeed, more than that, the whole history of the western world bears the imprint of the Hebrew mind. Every Sunday our great department stores remain closed all day. No great university would require class attendance on the Christian sabbath. Not even the atheistic leaders of the French Revolution were able to destroy this hallowed custom of "six days shalt thou labor" out of each week. Calendars have changed, but the week of seven days has survived all revolutions and all inventions. These are but a few instances out of thousands to show how vast is the power of the Hebrew religion. Surpassing by far that of Greek

mythology, it has continued to shed its light upon the West wherever Christians have trod. There was a time when New England was dominated by the code of Moses, and surely the student of history in America can no longer shut his eyes to the influence of the Hebrews.

**The Hebrew Alphabet.** Until very recently the credit for the origin of our alphabet was given to the Phoenicians, a Semitic people living immediately to the north of Palestine. They were interested primarily in commerce and industry, and from their famous ports they sent out their many ships to trade in all parts of the Mediterranean Sea. Many scholars did not ask whether a people like the Phoenicians, so devoid of literary talents and so little interested in philosophy and religion, could really have originated the alphabet.

**The Hebrews Pass on Their Alphabet to the Phoenicians.** Recent excavations upon the site of Lachish, the chief walled city of Judah, have revealed that the Hebrews contributed much to the invention of the alphabet and probably passed on their knowledge to the Phoenicians, while the latter instructed the Greeks. From the Greeks in turn the Romans derived their alphabet, but the common source of all may be that devised by the Hebrews about the fourteenth century B. C. During the wanderings of the Hebrews on the Sinai Peninsula they had learned to develop the rudiments of their alphabet, which was fully completed by the middle of the fourteenth century B. C.

## THE PHOENICIANS

**The Land and the People.** North of Palestine lived the Phoenicians, who, like the Hebrews, belonged to the Semitic race. Their country was too mountainous to make possible a flourishing agriculture on any large scale, with the result that the Phoenicians turned toward the sea for a living. They became the most enterprising merchants in the period from 1200 to 350 B. C.

**Their Chief Ports and Colonies.** As early as 2700 B. C. the Egyptians began to trade with the Phoenician port of Byblos, or Gebal. From about 1550 to 1200 B. C. Palestine (Canaan) and Phoenicia formed a province of Egypt. But after 1200 B. C.

the Phoenicians surpassed the Egyptians as traders. First Sidon, then Tyre, became a world-famed port, from which the Phoenicians carried on their commerce with Egypt, the coasts of Asia Minor, the Balkan Peninsula, Italy, and the western Mediterranean. Their chief colony was the mighty port of Carthage, which in the sixth century B. C. was the largest city in northern Africa, with a population of about 750,000. They also founded flourishing industries, such as the manufacture of metalwork, glassware, objects made of ivory, and a beautiful purple dye extracted from a shellfish. Their purple textiles were indeed highly prized in many lands. Moreover, the Phoenicians possessed valuable forests of cedar, which grew upon the slopes of the Lebanon Mountains.

**Their Religion and Literary Attainments.** They worshipped many gods, the best-known of which was Baal. Their religious literature was very much inferior to that of the Hebrews. Greatly overestimated, moreover, was their contribution to the shaping of our alphabet, although from them the Greeks did obtain the names of most of the letters, *aleph* becoming *alpha*, and *beth*, *beta*; hence the word *alphabet*, named after the first two letters of the Greek alphabet.

### THE ARAMAEANS

**The People.** Both the Hebrews and the Phoenicians were closely related to and strongly affected by another people called the Aramaeans. They lived in the region to the east, much of which was a part of the Syrian desert. With the decline of the Hittite rule in northern Syria, the Aramaeans constructed important cities of their own, including Damascus, where they set up a monarchic form of government. From about 850 to 732 B. C. they protected the Hebrews against the Assyrians, although they were usually unfriendly to the kingdom of Israel. In 732 B. C. their state fell before the hosts of Assyria.

**History after 732 B. C.** From Damascus the Aramaeans traded with all their neighbors, gradually extending their lucrative commerce to distant lands. They adopted the Phoenician alphabetic writing and spread it into India. Such was their influence



that from 750 to 606 B. C. the weights employed in commercial transactions throughout Syria and Assyria carried in practically all instances Aramaic names.

**The Aramaic Language.** Even in Palestine the Aramaic language became very popular, so that by the time of Jesus of Nazareth it had supplanted the old Hebrew tongue. Jesus Himself used the Aramaic tongue, and some of the books of the Old Testament were written in that language. In Mesopotamia the Aramaeans were able to introduce their script, with the result that cuneiform writing ceased altogether. In this instance "the pen was mightier than the sword."

## *Significant Dates*

Establishment of Assyrian Empire . . . . .	745 B.C.
Fall of Assyria . . . . .	606 B.C.
Fall of Babylon . . . . .	538 B.C.
Egypt Annexed by Persia . .	525 B.C.

### CHAPTER V.

## THE ASSYRIAN AND PERSIAN EMPIRES

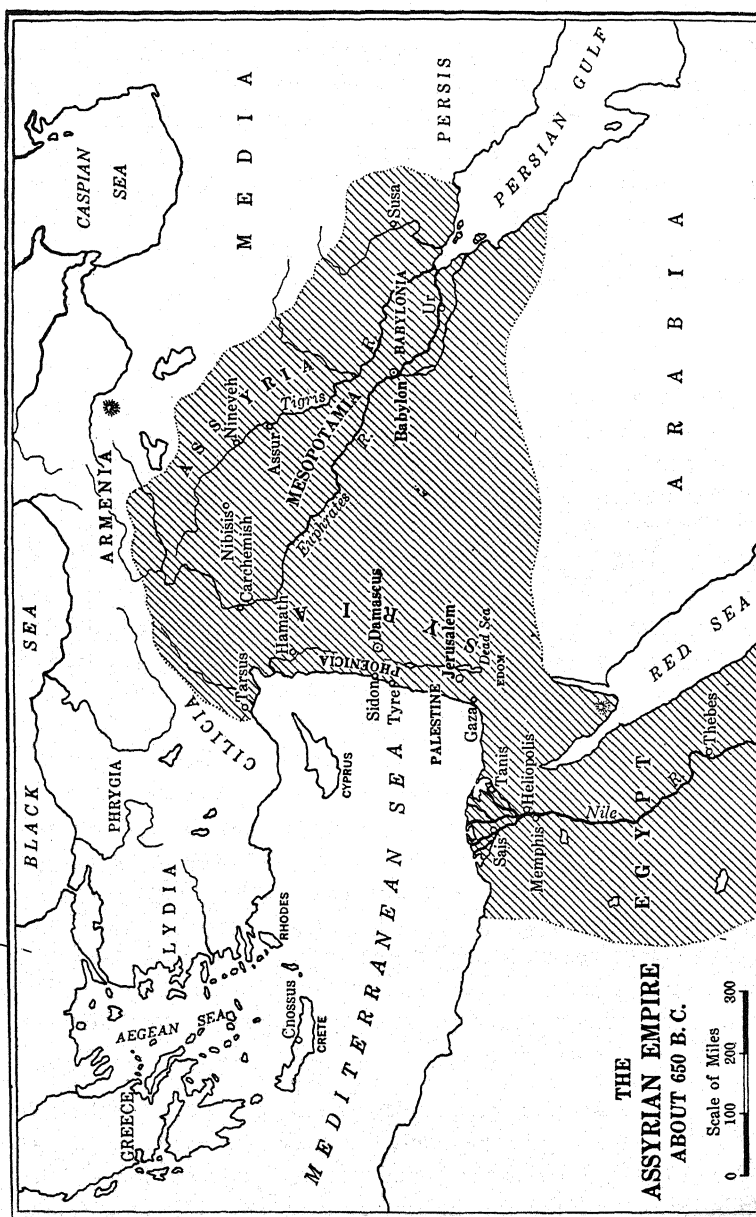
During the twelfth century B. C., when Babylon was rapidly declining, when the Egyptians lost their hold upon Syria and parts of Arabia, and when the Hittites also became subject to decay and deterioration, the Assyrians grasped the opportunity presented by their weakened neighbors and founded a kingdom of considerable power that afterward grew into a real empire. The Assyrians conquered Babylonia, Syria, and Egypt. But, in spite of great political power, they were unable to emulate either the Sumerians or the Egyptians of old in the arts or sciences. In literature and religion they also were merely imitators. When their turn came to decline at last, they were conquered by the Persians, an Indo-European people who had come out of the eastern plateaus of Iran. Sometimes these people were also called Aryan, an adjective derived from the noun "Iran." The Persians constructed the greatest empire that the world had ever known, but it was to be of relatively short duration, lasting less than three hundred years. It was overthrown during the fourth century B. C. by Alexander the Great. The Persians not only were successful upon the battlefield, but they also mastered the art of governing

subject peoples. They made great contributions, as we shall see, to the system of imperial government. Furthermore, they likewise surpassed the Assyrians in developing a remarkable and influential religion of their own. Interesting also is the interlude between the fall of Assyria and the establishment of Persia as a great empire. This is the period of the New Babylonia. From 606 to 538 B. C. Babylonia was the most magnificent city in the world, but sudden and great was its fall.

### THE ASSYRIAN EMPIRE

**Political History of Assyria after 1000 B. C.** Shortly before the year 900 B. C. the Assyrians began their expansion in all directions. At first they tried in vain to subjugate Babylonia. But they succeeded in checking the invaders to the north of Syria, part of which they were able to annex. Under Shalmaneser III (860-825 B. C.) the Assyrians defeated an alliance of Israel, Syria, and Phoenicia. In 842 B. C. the king of Assyria compelled the Israelites to pay a tribute to him. The next king extended the frontiers of Assyria to the Persian Gulf. Then followed the annexation of the Aramaean kingdom in 732 B. C. and the conquest of Israel in 722 B. C. Under Sargon II (722-705 B. C.) the empire of the Assyrians attained its zenith. During his reign about 200,000 persons were deported from conquered lands to Mesopotamia. Among these were many thousands of Hebrews. Babylon, which had been conquered by his predecessor, and which had risen in rebellion, was subdued once more in 709 B. C. Asia Minor was also conquered as far to the west as the Halys River. But during the second half of the seventh century B. C. the Assyrians suddenly underwent a swift decline, terminated by the fall of their great capital, Nineveh, in 612 B. C. and the total destruction of the state in 606 B. C.

**The Government of the Assyrian Empire.** Unlike the ancient Babylonians and Egyptians, the Assyrians were able to establish a highly efficient government of the conquered lands. The administration of the provinces was excellent. The king established a royal postal service, and was kept in constant touch with the conquered territories through the official letters and reports. The king of Assyria established an absolute form of government



with a hereditary kingship. His officials were responsible to him alone, while he as civil ruler and as head of the priesthood was not responsible to the people at large but only to the national god Ashur. Although many of the cities enjoyed a large amount of local independence (*autonomy*), they were nevertheless firmly ruled by the national administration.

**Economic Developments.** Since Assyria was a large state in which a relatively small amount of land could be cultivated, most of the wealth of Assyria was concentrated in and near the city of Nineveh, the great capital. Commerce was extensive, but was carried on for the most part by foreigners. The Assyrians preferred to attend to agricultural duties. Like the Spaniards of a later age, they preferred that commerce and industry be administered by despised industrial workers. As we have seen, the Aramaeans were the traders of the empire. Most of the land was held by the king who passed on much of it to his officers and the temples, as well as to some of the city-states, where a large number of free farmers or peasants also held land of their own. Moreover, there were serfs, as in Egypt, who received the use of lands partly in return for labor and partly in return for one-third of the crops produced on these lands.

**Assyrian Art of Warfare.** One reason why the Assyrians paid so little attention to commerce was that as a rule they were preoccupied with the arts of warfare. From the Hittites they learned how to use iron in improving their arms. They employed both infantry and cavalry, but no longer used the old unwieldy chariot. Their soldiers were armed with lances, swords, bows and arrows, breastplates, helmets, and shields. They developed an excellent technique in attacking fortified cities. Since such cities as a rule were surrounded by walls made of brick, they were easily torn down. Unspeakable cruelties attended the seizure of cities and rural districts. The Assyrian Empire was truly built on military despotism.

**Learning and Art.** In keeping with the huge size of the Assyrian Empire, the rulers saw fit to have enormous palaces and temples constructed. These were built upon a stone foundation, but the structure itself was made of brick, although the columns

were of stone. From the Babylonians they learned the use of the arch, but used it much more extensively than the Babylonians themselves had done. The palaces comprised a number of courts, each of which was surrounded by a large number of rooms. Within the central enclosure there was built a great tower temple. The building as a whole was fortified with heavy walls and the customary towers and gates. Assyrian sculpture is not impressive, for the figures of human beings seem inanimate. On the other hand, great skill was displayed in depicting animals, particularly lions. Even so, this work was no more than an imitation of what had been done in Babylonia two thousand years before. Their writing was also an imitation of the Babylonian, while afterwards the Assyrians imitated the Aramaeans. But they surpassed the Babylonians in the size of libraries built by kings. From the library of King Assur-bani-pal 22,000 tablets have been recovered, some of which contain interesting work on science, history, mathematics, and the royal administration. But it can not be said that important contributions were made either in these literary types or fields of thought.

**Assyrian Religion.** In the field of religion also the Assyrians failed to make notable contributions.\* They adopted the Babylonian god Marduk, but retained their own god Ashur. Since they were much less polytheistically inclined than the Babylonians, they seemed to reflect some degree of independence. The priests in Assyria had much less power than those in Babylonia, because the king for the most part concentrated religious functions in his own hands. Like the Babylonians and the Egyptians, the Assyrians believed that the spirits of the dead remained for a long time near the corpses. Nevertheless, they made use of cremation.

## THE NEW BABYLONIA

**Political History.** The peoples who overthrew the Assyrian Empire between 612 and 606 B. C. were the Medes, the Persians, and the inhabitants of ancient Babylonia. The Medes about

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\* It is probably inadvisable to credit the theory that between 722 and 612 B. C. the Assyrians exerted great influence upon the Hebrew prophets—when the latter, for example, are said to have written a number of legends which make up the book of Genesis.

1000 B. C. had constructed a state of their own to the east of Mesopotamia. They established a kingdom during the eighth century B. C., and during the second half of the seventh century B. C. they allied themselves with the Babylonians to overthrow the Assyrian Empire. In 625 B. C. the Babylonians had established their independence under a king of their own, who was succeeded by his famous son Nebuchadnezzar (604-561 B. C.). This ruler proceeded to extend the boundaries of the new kingdom until in 587 B. C. he appeared with a huge army before the city of Jerusalem in the kingdom of Judah. After a siege of eight months the city fell, its temple was burned, and thousands of Jews were exiled to Babylonia. However, he was not able to subjugate the whole of Phoenicia, since its port, Tyre, was impregnable. But when in 561 B. C. Nebuchadnezzar died, the new state began a rapid decline. In 538 B. C. Babylonia was captured by the Persians.

**Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar.** So large was Babylon during the sixth century B. C. that its walls had a circumference of thirteen miles. The outer wall was constructed of brick and was about eighty-five feet thick. No other city of the ancient world had walls that thick. The principal streets were beautifully laid out and crossed each other at right angles. Imposing in particular was the huge palace of Nebuchadnezzar, the courtyard of which alone measured 193 by 180 feet. One of the rooms measured 171 by 56 feet. The building was constructed of glazed (or enameled) brick, but even more impressive in the eyes of visitors from foreign lands were the so-called Hanging Gardens, which were roof gardens in the form of terraces where grew magnificent plants and tropical flowers. Another great structure was the Temple of Marduk, near which was constructed a temple tower upon a platform three hundred feet square. Some writers are of the opinion that this temple tower of Nebuchadnezzar induced a certain Hebrew writer to contribute to the book of Genesis his account of the Tower of Babel. Such seems an unnecessary conclusion, inasmuch as temple towers of this type—the so-called *ziggurat*—were constructed in ancient Mesopotamia long before the book of Genesis was written by Moses during the fifteenth century B. C.

**Babylonian Civilization during the Sixth Century B. C.**

At this time Babylon was the largest and most prosperous city in the world, with a population estimated at half a million. Commerce unquestionably reached a height never before seen in Mesopotamia. All the luxuries of the ancient Near East were brought together in this one city. Side by side with the thousands upon thousands of slaves and down-trodden free laborers, there existed a class of society bitterly criticized by some of the Hebrew prophets. The latter claimed that the city was doomed because of its luxurious and wicked mode of living. Contributions made by the city during the brief reign of splendor under Nebuchadnezzar to the making of western civilization are very meager indeed. Only in the field of astrology did the Babylonians excel. Inasmuch as the state often was called Chaldea and its inhabitants of the sixth century B. C. the Chaldeans, one speaks usually of Chaldean astrology in designating that which was in vogue during the sixth century B. C. Even in the time of the Romans, eight hundred years later, it was still customary to speak of Chaldeans as experts in the field of astrology. It is generally assumed that the wise men from the East who are mentioned in the Gospel of Luke, and who are said to have seen the star of Jesus Christ in the East, were Chaldean astrologers. Of such importance in the eyes of the Babylonians were the planets that the astrological beliefs passed on from Chaldea to the Romans later affected the West, and three days out of the week in the English language pay reference to them, that is, the day of the sun (Sunday), the day of the moon (Monday) and the day of Saturn (Saturday).

**THE PERSIAN EMPIRE**

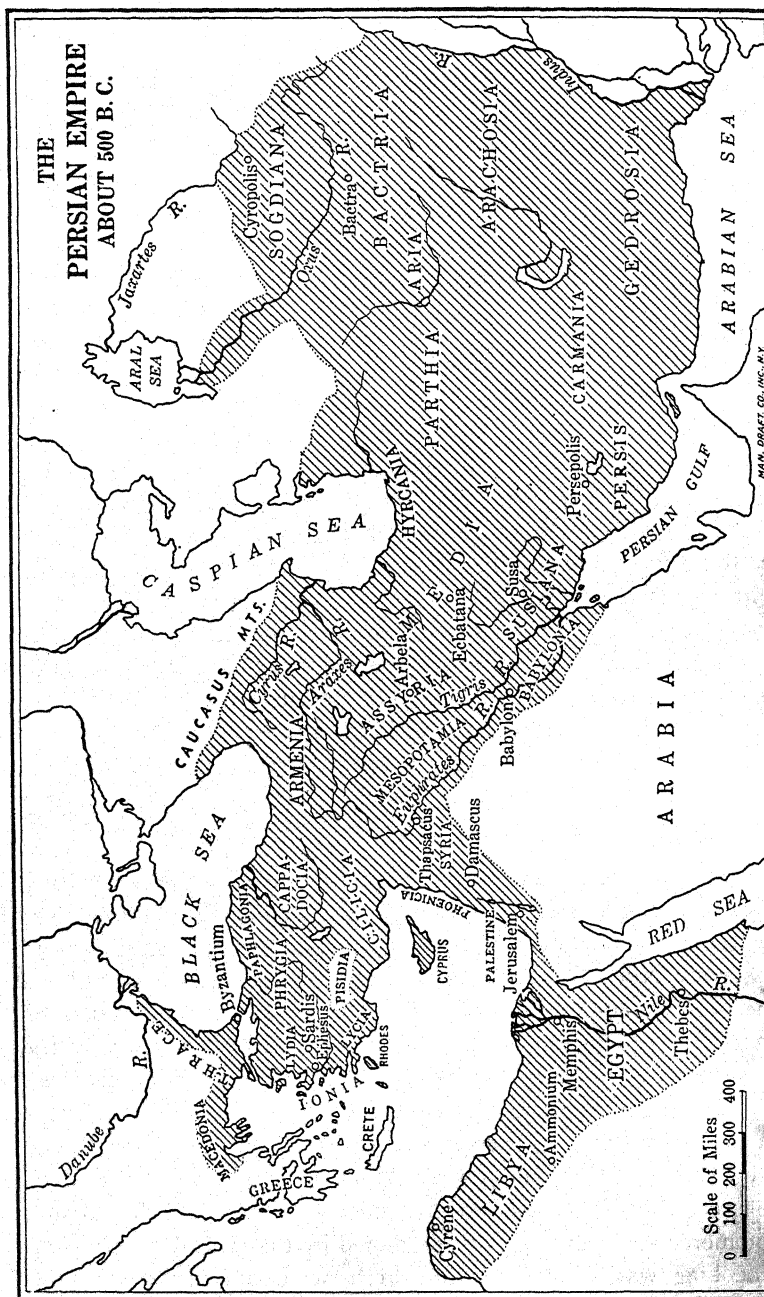
**Political History.** The Persians originally lived on the plateau called Iran. About the year 550 B. C. they were led by an important ruler called Cyrus the Great. But as yet they were allied with and dominated by the Medes. In 549 B. C. Cyrus overthrew the Medean government and seized its capital. Now the Persians became the masters of the Medes. In 539 B. C. Cyrus attacked Babylon, which fell in the next year. Upon his death in 529 B. C. his son Cambyses succeeded him. The latter made a permanent conquest of Egypt in 525 B. C., something which the



Assyrians had never been able to achieve. Cambyses was succeeded in turn by Darius (521-485 B. C.), who is chiefly known for his attempted conquest of the Greek city-states.

**The Rise and Fall of Lydia.** When in 546 B. C. King Cyrus conquered the kingdom of Lydia in Asia Minor, he found there one of the most remarkable states of antiquity. Here lived a king of fabulous wealth called Croesus, whose name is still used when reference is made to persons of exceedingly great wealth. It was one of the first countries to establish the use of a coinage. The Lydians, like the Persians, belonged to an Indo-European race, and not to the Semitic race. They had succeeded the Hittites as the dominating power in Asia Minor. It was during the eighth century B. C. that the Lydians invented the use of metallic coinage, which differed from the gold and silver bars used by the Assyrians and other merchants in that they were stamped with a statement saying that the government guaranteed the correct weight and purity of the metal used in making the coins. The first coins seem to have been made from gold and silver smelted with some alloy. The standard gold coin of Lydia was called the *stater*. Being engrossed in the making of money and the extension of commerce, the Lydians had failed to prepare adequate defense against the coming Persians, and so it naturally happened that their kingdom was quickly destroyed by King Cyrus.

**The Government of the Persian Empire.** Establishing peace and order in the unwieldy state stretching from the borders of India to the waters of the Aegean Sea and the lands beyond the river Nile, was a difficult task. But the Assyrians had led the way in empire building and in excellent administration of conquered provinces. The Persians improved on the system of the Assyrians, with the result that for more than two hundred years all the dominions were firmly held together by the Persian ruler in his capital Susa or Persepolis. One reason for the success of the Persian administration was that the conquered peoples enjoyed religious toleration. Moreover, taxes were carefully levied and commerce and industry were promoted by the central government. The king was a hereditary monarch, who said that he was responsible only to the chief god, Ahura-Mazda. This was not unusual, since even Hammurapi had followed this course, as we



saw. But the king was careful to consult his chief ministers, and he paid careful attention to local customs everywhere. The administration of justice and the collection of taxes were humane and just. This can not be said of the Assyrian rule, which therefore did not last as long as that of the Persians. The empire was divided into 21 provinces, called satrapies, each of which was ruled by a governor or satrap. This governor had military powers only in case of war, for it was held that the civil administration and the military administration could not be combined in the hands of one governor. The central administration sent regular inspectors to the different provinces, and it also maintained a secretary in each of them.

**The Persian Army.** The success of the Persian government lay more in its efficient administration than in the strength of its army. The armed forces were collected from the various subject races throughout the empire, and formed units of ten thousand each, which in turn were divided into units of one thousand each. The officers naturally were Persians and Medes, so that they would be able to prevent rebellion of the soldiers.

**The Persian Navy.** After the conquest of the western shores of Asia Minor and Syria and a part of the eastern shores of the Balkan Peninsula, the Persians developed a huge navy, made up of one thousand Greek and Phoenician ships. A merchant marine was also developed, and explorers were induced to venture forth along the coasts of India. In Egypt navigation was restored between the Nile and the city at the head of the Red Sea, the present Suez. The military and naval strength of the empire was considerably enhanced by a magnificent system of roads and bridges. Along the roads were constructed relay stations and inns for the use of the garrisons that had to be stationed at various strategic points.

**Persian Civilization.** The Persians resembled the Assyrians in that they were too intent on imperial administration to foster the fine arts and sciences. Their architecture and sculpture were largely an imitation of Babylonian and Assyrian patterns. From the Egyptians the Persians learned the use of colonnades. They also received from Egypt the solar calendar. Perhaps their

greatest palace was that constructed in the city of Persepolis, which was built on a platform introduced by a huge stairway. This stairway, almost three hundred feet in length, was the most imposing one in the ancient Orient. Impressive also were the beautiful gateway and the fine colonnade.

**The Persian Religion.** The Persians exhibited great originality in the development of their religion. Although at first the Persians resembled the ancient Babylonians in their polytheistic mode of worship, in the seventh or sixth century B. C. a great religious reformer appeared in their midst, who was known as Zoroaster or Zarathustra. He explained to his followers in Persia that the worship of the sun, which had been common among them, was just as bad as the worship of the moon, which had been prevalent in such cities as Ur. Zoroaster accepted the wide belief in the existence of the evil and good spirits, a belief supported not only in Egypt but also in Babylonia. According to Zoroaster, God had created the world for the purpose of providing for human beings a stage upon which powers of good and evil would oppose each other. In other words, human beings would be put through a school of training upon this earth, and they would be free to listen to either the good or the evil spirits, both guided by a high power, which in the case of the good spirits was the god called Ahura-Mazda or Ormuzd, who was assisted in his work by a savior called Mithra. The god of the evil spirits was named Agra Mainyu or Ahriman. Good was symbolized by light, while evil was symbolized by darkness.

**The Promise of Eternal Life.** It is interesting to observe that human beings who decided to be good upon this earth, were expected to be rewarded with eternal life, while, on the other hand, the others would be subject to darkness and misery in the realm beyond the gates of death. Some day in the remote future, good would triumph over evil, and Ahriman with his evil spirits would be defeated and destroyed. After this contest was over, the earth as physically constituted would vanish, since it had completed its task.

**Influence of the Persian Religion.** Many scholars have concluded that, since there is such a close parallel between the

Persian and Christian doctrines concerning the forces of good and evil, the Christians must have copied their beliefs from the Persians. They noted that the Hebrews had failed to give definite expression to the doctrine concerning eternal life. The Hebrews merely believed that the dead gathered together in a realm called Sheol, or Hades. It was the Greeks who used the word "Hades," but their conception was very similar to the "Sheol" of the Hebrews. The Persians, on the other hand, were much more definite in their opinion concerning future life, and, apparently under the influence of the Persians, the later Hebrew writings, such as the book of Enoch, developed the same doctrine of the victorious struggle of good over evil and a future life of eternal happiness, called heaven. Afterward the Persians and the Jews came to the conclusion that destruction for the evil-minded persons was not sufficient, and so opined that such people should be tortured forever and ever. Many scholars are now of the belief that the Christians took over the Persian view of the purpose of the earthly life and of the nature of the future life. Christians are said to owe their faith partly to the Jews and partly to the later Persians, who had developed the doctrines called Mithraism and Manichaeism.

**Zoroaster and the Jews.** There was once a time when historians believed that Zoroaster flourished in the fifteenth century B. C., and was a contemporary of Moses. After years of research and excavations, it was seen that he must have lived more recently. Today certain authorities are convinced that Zoroaster probably lived in the sixth century B. C., or perhaps even later. It would seem, therefore, that the Persians and the Hebrews affected each other considerably. The exiled Jews who were living in Mesopotamia, where they had been brought by their conquerors, must have learned much from the Persians, and the latter also must have been influenced by the Hebrews. Since the kingdom of Israel was overthrown as early as 722 B. C., and many thousands of the inhabitants of that ancient kingdom were taken to Assyria, it is obvious that they carried with them the teachings of their prophets. In 586 B. C. the kingdom of Judah was destroyed, and once more a large number of Hebrews, hereafter called Jews, were removed to Mesopotamia by their conquerors.

There can be no question about the remarkable change that came over the Hebrews in their new environment. That the Persians had something to do with the change is undoubted. Unlike the Medes and Chaldeans, who had conquered the kingdom of Judea, the Persians, who in turn overthrew the empires of the Medes and the Chaldeans, were much kinder to the Jews than their predecessors had been. In 536 B. C. the Persian ruler gave the Jews permission to return to their own country. Although some of them did so forthwith, the great majority remained in ancient Mesopotamia.

**The Avesta.** One of the recent books published that deal with the history of the ancient Near East indicates that Zoroaster probably lived at the beginning of the sixth century B. C., that is, at the very time that the kingdom of Judah was destroyed by the Babylonians and many of its inhabitants were taken captive to Mesopotamia. He must have been familiar with the Hebrews who were in his time living under New Babylonian rule in ancient Mesopotamia. This book indicates that Zoroaster completely broke with the old Iranian religion, with its polytheism, animal sacrifices, and priests. It also explains how a large collection of Zoroastrian religious writings which had been composed during the sixth and fifth centuries B. C. were put together in the famous work entitled the *Avesta*. We observe here that the ethical tendency of the Persian religion is reflected in the moral, just, and humane spirit of the Persian government, and is expressed in many inscriptions of the Persian kings, such as that of the great Darius and Behistun inscription, "On this account Ahura-Mazda brought me health. . . Because I was not wicked, nor was I a liar, nor was I a tyrant, neither I nor any of my line. We have ruled according to righteousness."<sup>1</sup>

**Influence of the Hebrew Religion upon the Persian Religion.** The present writer is of the opinion that there is nothing in the ancient Persian religion to have suddenly developed so extraordinary a point of view as that expressed by the more or

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<sup>1</sup> See A. A. Trever, *History of Ancient Civilisation*, Vol. I (New York, 1936), pp. 116-117.

less legendary character called Zarathustra, or Zoroaster. Almost nothing is known about his life, and no one can tell in what century he lived. Nevertheless, in a relatively short time the religion of the Persians was completely transformed. It must be concluded that the influence exerted by the Hebrews upon the Persians was much greater than that exerted by the Persians upon the Hebrews.

## *Significant Dates*

Grand Age of Cretans . 3400-1400 B.C.

The Mycenaean Age . 1500-1200 B.C.

Age of Homer . . . . . 900 B.C.

Overthrow of Greek King-  
doms . . . . . 800 B.C.

## CHAPTER VI.

# THE BACKGROUND OF GREEK HISTORY

The man of the late stone age in Crete and the Aegean area (now generally called the Early Minoan period) had made considerable progress by 3000 B. C. Owing to the abundance of ores, he had reached the age of metals in southeastern Europe and Asia Minor, and was doing considerable trading with other peoples. Such articles as pottery, beads, copper trinkets, and metal daggers or axes formed objects of bargaining, both with Western Asia and with Egypt. In some respects, though, this man was backward: he had not learned to write, he had no ships worthy of the name, and he had developed no hewn or stone masonry.

## THE AEGEAN WORLD

**The Land.** Lying almost hemmed in by the shores of the Greek peninsula, Asia Minor, and southern Europe, is the Aegean Sea. It is small in size and is dotted with many islands, some of which are too tiny to show on an ordinary map. The closeness of these islands made them accessible to the small boats of people not used to the sea. The climate was mild and sufficiently rainy to produce wheat, barley, grapes, and olives. It was near to Egypt



and Western Asia, while to the east and west lay the less developed regions of Asia Minor and the Greek peninsula. This peninsula had an extremely irregular sea coast, many ports and bays, and short mountain ranges, but no river worthy of the name. The climate and products of Asia Minor and the Greek peninsula resembled those of the islands, except that Asia Minor produced iron. The physical features of these regions encouraged a diversity of occupations, made seafaring easy and commerce natural, and hindered political unity.

**Asia Minor and the Hittites.** Asia Minor is a vast peninsula, bounded by seas, bordered by mountain ranges and fertile valleys, and containing a desert core. Here lived, as we saw, the Hittites, many of whom migrated to the Aegean World. They influenced the Greeks in commerce, coinage, religion, and architecture. With their horses, chariots, and large armies they conquered much of the surrounding country, and made their walled capital, Khatti, a city of imposing palaces and temples.

**Influence of Egypt.** It appears that the first fruits of civilization were brought to Europe from the south, that is, from Egypt. For reasons still unknown some Egyptians removed from their native land to the island of Crete, located about 400 miles northwest of Egypt. Before 2500 B. C. the earliest settlers built homes in the southern valleys of Crete, where they transplanted Egyptian culture. They learned to cultivate the soil and to grow the olive tree. Presently a relatively small number of people arrived from Asia Minor, as is indicated by the presence of broad skulls buried in Cretan soil, very similar to those of the earliest inhabitants of western Asia Minor.

**Metalwork and Pottery.** As early as 2500 B. C. the Cretans were using implements made out of bronze, the earliest of which they may have imported from Egypt. But they soon discovered rich deposits of bronze on their own island, and they also found suitable clay for the making of pottery, which, unlike Egyptian and Sumerian pottery of the period between 3000 and 2000 B. C., was not made with the use of the potter's wheel.

**Architecture.** For building materials they contented themselves with sun-dried bricks which were set in a framework of wood. Numerous houses, however, were built out of stone, presumably before the people had learned to manufacture brick. Large palaces were constructed of brick superimposed upon stone foundations. Especially grand were those at Cnossos and Phaestos in Crete.

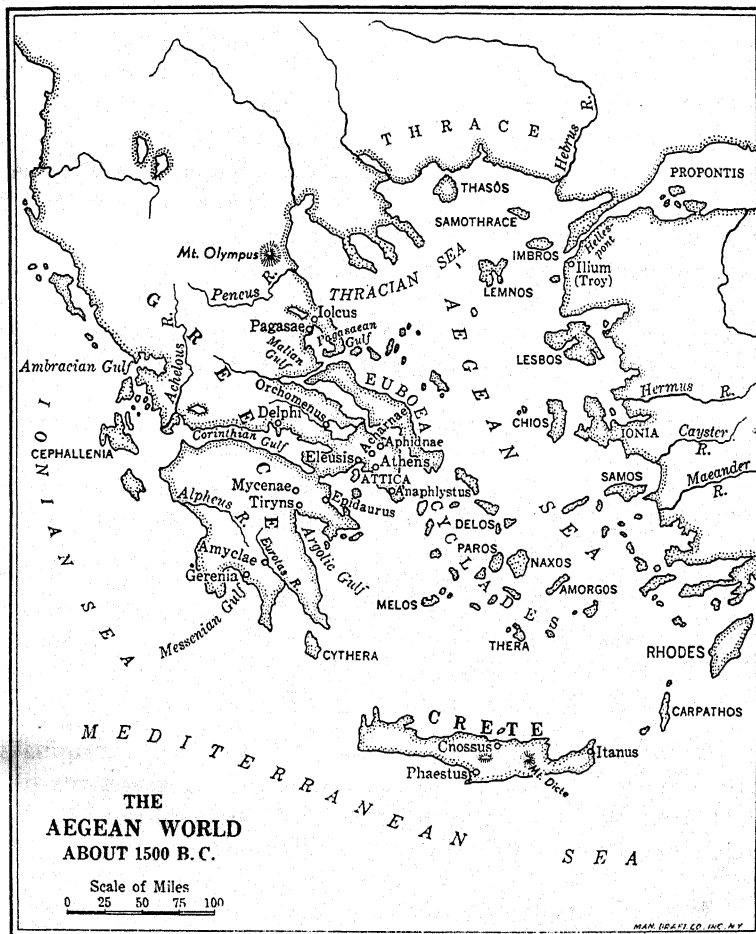
**Painting and Sculpture.** The interior walls were decorated with *frescoes* painted about 1500 B. C. (that is, paintings produced on a wall surface), which reveal the mode of life of the Cretans. We also obtain views of their environment by studying the painted surfaces of the pottery. We learn from them that the Cretans loved sports, such as wrestling and exciting contests with bulls. Most attractive are the elegant figures carved out of ivory, or made out of gold, silver, or bronze. They show that sculpture developed hand in hand with architecture, painting, and writing. They also testify to the powerful influence of Egypt, and later that of Babylonia.

**Writing.** A graceful form of script was used by the earliest inhabitants, who undoubtedly took with them from Egypt the knowledge of hieroglyphic writing. Afterward the use of pictures in their script was replaced by a form of script which clearly was an imitation of Babylonian writing, for the clay tablets now employed and the characters inscribed upon them resemble the cuneiform writing of Babylonia. Unfortunately, the two forms of script have not yet been deciphered.

**Crete's Golden Age (Late Minoan Age).** The golden age of Cretan (Minoan) civilization lasted from about 1700 to 1400 B. C., when huge palaces were constructed for the kings and when Cretan ships extended the sway of Cretan political power over the islands of the Aegean Sea and the west coast of Asia Minor. In some respects the Cretans surpassed both the Egyptians and the Babylonians, for they invented an ingenious system of water supply and drainage.

**Form of Government.** Little is known about their form of government, but we are reasonably certain that they maintained several city-states, each with a king at the head. Very likely the

environment in which the Cretans lived—the varied scenery combined with a more moderate climate—impelled them to introduce into their government a distinctly democratic note. The arts show at least that the people were more free from conventional styles, more realistic in their painting, more natural in their actions, more refined than the inhabitants of Egypt and Babylonia. They had as well a finer sense of beauty.



**Religion.** However, in their religion we see little progress, for they worshipped a mother-goddess, perhaps in imitation

of the people in Asia Minor, with whom they were in intimate contact, and from whom many of their people had come to live in the island.

**Troy and Mycenae.** Among other centers of Cretan civilization may be mentioned the celebrated city of Troy in the north-western corner of Asia Minor, and Mycenae in southern Greece. Excavations have shown a marked similarity between the culture of the original center, Crete, and those that were dependent on it. They flourished between 1500 and 1200 B. C. Being situated on the mainland, they required heavy fortifications, which are not to be found in Crete. Troy owed much of its prosperity to its position near the present site of Constantinople (Istanbul), where the straits lead from the Black Sea to the Aegean and where the land route connects Europe with Asia. The tolls levied upon commerce must have led to friction with the Greeks, who seem to have carried on a war with Troy, according to the first great Greek writer, Homer. Homer, however, ignores the economic background, and pictures the war as caused by the abduction of a beautiful Greek woman (Helen of Troy.)

**Excavations and Discoveries.** A German archaeologist named Schliemann uncovered in the nineteenth century nine successive cities on the site of Troy, and sponsored a similar work at Mycenae and Tiryns. The German scholar Doerpfeld continued his work. Others have made excavations on the island of Crete (notably Sir Arthur Evans) and at Khatti. Many Cretan and Hittite records have also been uncovered, but not all have been deciphered.

### EARLY GREEK COLONIZATION

**Origin and Early History of the Greeks.** The original Greeks were Indo-Europeans, and were from the grasslands of southeastern Europe. They were a nomadic pastoral people, less civilized than the Cretans or Hittites.

**Migrations and Settlements.** The first bands, called Achaeans, probably reached the Greek peninsula about 2000 B. C. The next group, the Dorians, reached southern Greece about 1100 B. C., conquered the Achaeans and Aegeans and took possession

jects had spirits, and might be worshipped with gifts of food or sacrifices. Gradually the Greeks added many gods and goddesses. A partial list follows: Zeus was the supreme god; Poseidon was god of the sea; Hera, wife of Zeus; Ares, god of war; Apollo, god of light, agriculture, and destruction; Demeter, earth mother; Dionysius, god of suffering and wine; Athena, protectress of cities; Aphrodite, goddess of love; Artemis, goddess of the moon and hunters; and Hermes, messenger of the gods. These gods showed human defects, but were immortal. Mount Olympus was their home, but they often visited the earth. Hades was a gloomy region ruled by Pluto and Persephone, where almost everyone went after death. Heroes and a favored few, the spirits of the good, went to the Elysian Fields. Tartarus was a region below Hades peopled by the very wicked. The earth was a curved disk, with Olympus as the center. Temples and oracles were built in honor of Zeus, Apollo, and Athena.

## *Significant Dates*

Draco's Code . . . . .	621 B.C.
The Reforms of Solon . .	594 B.C.
Greco-Persian Wars . .	492-479 B.C.
The Athenian Empire . .	461-404 B.C.
Spartan Supremacy . .	404-371 B.C.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE GREEK CITY-STATES

In the whole history of the civilized world no country as small as Greece and no part of any other country as large as Greece has shown such a profusion of learning, sane standards of living, enlightened experiments in practically every known form of government, industrial and commercial development, successful colonization, and artistic production as did the Greeks in the short period from 600 to 300 B. C.

#### THE AGE OF THE NOBLES (800-600 B. C.)

**Overthrow of the Kings.** Four city-states developed: Argos, Sparta, Athens, and Thebes, and kings ruled these. But the Greeks had none of the Oriental reverence for kings, and hence often aided restless nobles to overthrow the rulers.

**Continued Colonization.** The nobles built ships and encouraged commerce, especially with the Phoenicians and other neighbors. Three leading causes promoted the establishment of colonies: the harshness of the nobles, the poverty of the peasants, and the desire to promote commerce. Under such impulses, Greek colonists went out in every direction, until they fairly dotted the Mediterranean world. These colonists spread Greek civilization and made it supreme in the Mediterranean.

**Government.** The nobles gained leadership of the government and the army. Sometimes they overthrew the king, but often they simply usurped his powers and allowed him to remain.

**Economic and Cultural Progress.** Commerce developed greatly, and architecture showed some advancement, especially in the erection of temples. The epic poems of Homer and of Hesiod formed the principal literature.

**Influences For and Against Unity.** The Greeks had many interests in common. The athletic contests, held in honor of the gods, served to dispel suspicion and distrust. Their religion and common management of temples made cooperation necessary. Their common language and inheritance acted as bonds of unity. To counter-balance this was the powerful geographical factor—the separation into isolated valleys that made for strong local feelings. Neither did they have any unity arising out of earlier habits and customs, or even trade, nor did they seem to possess political ability.

#### THE AGE OF THE TYRANTS (650-500 B. C.)

**Nature and Position of a Tyrant.** A tyrant was one who seized control by violence and who had no royal ancestry. Some tyrants were good men and able rulers, and for such the Greeks might have gratitude, perhaps, but no love. To kill a bad tyrant was a noble deed.

**Cause for the Rise of Tyrants.** Many persons were dissatisfied at their losses of political privilege and land. Furthermore, certain military changes deprived the nobles of exclusive control over the army. The foot soldier became more prominent and the chariot less so. Many of the newly rich industrial leaders could equip themselves without noble aid. Factions among the nobles weakened them. The increasing use of money made many independent of the nobles, and caused its possessors to desire the positions that were denied them. The migration of peasants to colonies deprived the nobles of their following.

**Examples of Tyrants.** Thrasybulus of Miletus kept his city independent of Thebes. Periander of Corinth encouraged commerce and letters. Gelon of Syracuse maintained a great army

and navy. Pisistratus of Athens encouraged commerce, manufacturing, art, music, drama, and literature. Many others might be added to this list.

**Growth of Commerce and Industry.** Corinth and Athens led, but others followed, and the new colonies contributed much. Greek cities exported such articles as metals, woven goods, and pottery, and imported grain, fish, amber, and bronze utensils. Slaves became plentiful. By doing most of the labor, they helped to make possible a life of intellectual attainments for their owners. They increased the output of factories, especially of vases. Ships were improved and money came into general use. A regular monetary system arose, with coins stamped by the state.

#### THE RISE OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT AT ATHENS

**Causes for the Adoption of Law Codes.** Many felt that written law would be easier to follow than mere custom, and that oppression would be less likely. Once the process was begun, reforms were necessary to correct the defects of existing codes.

**Draco's Code (621 B. C.).** This was a collection of existing customs, especially regarding court procedure. It acquainted the people with the law and limited the power of officials, but was too harsh, forfeiture of mortgages and enslavement for debt being common.

**The Reforms of Solon (594 B. C.).** He abolished land mortgages and slavery for debt, provided a citizen jury to hear appeals, and made all citizens members of the Public Assembly. He divided the citizens of Athens into four classes, according to income, and created a Council of Four Hundred to prepare laws for the Public Assembly. This code remedied many defects, but did not prove entirely satisfactory.

**The Reforms of Cleisthenes (502 B. C.).** He re-arranged the citizens along territorial lines into tribes, or demes, and increased the Council to five hundred. To minimize the danger of tyrants, he introduced the practice of ostracism. (The name of an undesirable citizen would be written upon a ballot called *ostrakon*, and if the majority so voted, this citizen would be sent into exile.)



### CIVILIZATION OF THE AGE OF THE TYRANTS

**Education and the Theater.** Open air gymnasium work, writing, and music formed most of the boy's education. Choral dances developed, and from these came tragedy, which the actors presented in state-owned outdoor theaters.

**Architecture and Painting.** Limestone replaced sun-dried bricks as building material. Temples with Doric columns and relief figures of the gods became common. Sculptors created bronze and marble statues of heroes and athletes. Vases bore scenes depicting stories of the gods, myths, legends, and scenes of life.

**Religious Changes.** There was a growing feeling of right and wrong in connection with religion, and a tendency to deprive the gods of human traits.

**Science and Invention.** Thales of Miletus foretold eclipses; Pythagoras discovered important laws of geometry, physics, and geography. Anaximander believed in the evolution of lower animals to higher forms, and was the first Greek to make a map of the then-known world.

### THE PERSIAN WARS

**The Coming of the Persians.** In Italy and Sicily the Greek colonies lay open to invading Carthaginians, while those in Asia Minor were subject to attack from the interior. Moreover, the colonies had no political unity and suffered from jealousy and class struggles.

**The Lydian Kingdom in Asia Minor Falls.** The Lydians occupied much of Asia Minor and many had drifted into Greek colonies, where they became known as Anatolian Greeks. In 546 B. C. Persian forces defeated King Croesus and captured Sardis, his capital. They allowed the conquered their local freedom, but required tribute and army service.

**Causes of the Persian Wars.** The Persians, having started to conquer the Greeks, had to retreat or go all the way. Moreover, Persia and Greece were naval and commercial rivals, and represented conflicting racial and cultural standards. The im-

mediate cause was a revolt of Ionian cities against Persian rule, while Athens and Eretria assisted. In revenge the Persians annexed Macedonia (497 B. C.) and prepared to conquer Greece proper.

**The Battle of Marathon.** Persian messengers went to all Greek cities to demand submission. In the first attempted invasion, the Persian fleet was wrecked near Mt. Athos, but a second attempt straight across the Aegean was more successful. The rival armies engaged in the battle of Marathon (490 B. C.), which proved to be a decisive Greek victory.

**Final Repulse of the Persians.** After a delay of several years, the new Persian king, Xerxes, invaded Greece by land and sea from the north. His army overcame the Greeks at Thermopylae (480 B. C.) and even captured Athens, but his navy suffered defeats at Salamis and Mycale. Finally, the Persian army was decisively defeated and almost destroyed at Plataea (479 B. C.). These failures ended the Persian invasions of Greece.

### THE RISE OF SPARTA

**The Land and the People.** Sparta was located in southern Greece, on a level spot, but with mountains nearby. The ruling class, or Spartiates, probably never numbered over 10,000 men. The Perioeci (allied subjects) were remnants of earlier settlers that had been conquered by the Spartiates. The lowest class or *Helots* were state slaves.

**Government.** Two kings, co-equal in power, led the armies. The Council of Elders and the Public Assembly resembled the original institutions that the Greeks brought with them. Five men called Ephors exercised great power; they were chosen by the Assembly.

**Education.** Unhealthy children were turned over to *Helots* or exposed in a mountain glen. From seven to twenty years of age, the boy received military training in camps. Girls also received instruction in physical exercises.

**Occupations and Life.** From twenty to thirty, Spartan men continued their military life. At thirty a man married, but

continued in the army. The Helots worked the land, furnished the food, and paid most of the taxes. The Perioeci had a monopoly of trade and manufacturing. Foreigners were not welcome. Sparta organized and headed the Spartan League, which later opposed Athens.

#### THE GOLDEN AGE OF ATHENIAN DEMOCRACY

**Establishment of the Delian League.** Many Greek cities feared another Persian invasion, and sought to resist it by organizing a fleet, through contributions of ships or money. Athens, as the strongest city, led the enterprise. The money was kept at Delos, whence the name of the League.

**Conversion of this League into an Empire.** More money was collected than ships. When cities grew tired of paying they were forced to continue; even new cities were added by force. The treasury was finally moved to Athens and its contents spent on public works. The League had become an Athenian Empire.

**Social Classes in Athens.** For a considerable length of time the city of Athens recognized four social classes, the distinction between the respective classes being based on land ownership. In addition to these citizens, there were the *metics*, who were foreigners residing in the state and paying special taxes for permission to remain there.

**Officials and Assemblies.** Originally only the three higher classes were permitted to vote in the popular assembly, which was called the *ecclesia*. But about the year 594 B. C. Solon had granted permission to the fourth class to vote in the assembly. Solon had also made provision for a council that consisted of four hundred members, whose official name was the *boule*. The members of this council of four hundred were elected by lots from among the higher three classes. Moreover, three political parties had resulted, which were called respectively the *Shore* (the industrialists), the *Plane* (the aristocracy in the rural district), and the *Hill* (the peasants). It was the policy of the industrialists to combine either with the land nobility or with the peasants. Cleisthenes had introduced important changes, among them the division of Athens into ten tribes, which in turn were subdivided into *demes*. He

granted increased power to the assembly called the *ecclesia*, which consisted of male citizens who were at least twenty years of age. He also, as we saw above, enlarged the council called *boule* from four hundred to five hundred members, that is, fifty for each tribe. The respective tribes chose their representatives by lot from their citizens who were at least thirty years old. The old institution of *archons*, or chief ministers, continued, but they lost a considerable amount of power to the council called the *boule*. A little later each tribe also elected an official called *strategos* as general of the armed forces.

**Reforms in the Fifth Century B. C.** In this period the powers of the assembly called *ecclesia* were considerably increased. It met forty times a year, and after the death of Pericles paid the representatives who attended the meetings. The assembly acquired the power to check the accounts of officials upon their retirement, and it also had the right to declare war or peace, to administer the finances, the military defenses, foreign affairs, the distribution of grain, and religion. Although the *archons* retained their offices, they were shorn of political power. The *strategoi* (plural of *strategos*) remained very important.

**Government Revenues.** The city of Athens in its Golden Age levied tribute upon its subject states, derived revenue from property owned by the government, collected import and export dues at the harbor, received payments in the form of taxes from the *metics*, and also collected fees paid in the courts. In time of war it also levied an income tax upon its citizens.

**Other Developments.** After Cleisthenes' day, Athenians overthrew the Council of Elders. They also provided pay for jury service, and added to the jury's powers that of law making. All offices, except those of the military commanders, were filled by lot. The military leaders controlled the army, navy, treasury, and foreign affairs. A combined military leader and orator, such as Pericles, could still be powerful.

**Commercial Development of Greek Cities.** Almost every city had a harbor, which was dotted with ships. The perils of seafaring were many, but the profits of successful voyages were large. Money was used more and more to pay citizens for state



and farmers in or near Athens, and all participated in the government. Slaves sometimes outnumbered freemen. They were often honored and trusted, and dressed like freemen.

**Family and Home Life.** The houses were one-story affairs, built of sun-dried brick or limestone, with few windows, poor heating and ventilation systems, and no plumbing. The man spent most of his waking hours in the city. Little attention was paid to the education of the girl. The woman supervised the household and slaves, and brought her husband a dowry, which he forfeited if divorce occurred. Women were generally treated as inferior to the men.

**Education.** There were no public schools in Athens during the fifth century B. C., and the majority of the boys from the ages of six to fourteen attended various private schools, where they learned reading, writing, arithmetic, poetry, music, and ethics. Many of the boys also learned a trade by becoming apprentices in one of the industrial establishments. Those whose parents could afford to pay higher tuition than that charged in the ordinary schools, attended establishments conducted by the so-called Sophists. These teachers gave excellent instruction in rhetoric, poetry, political science, geometry, astronomy, and ethics.

When the youth reached eighteen he took an oath of loyalty to the state and the gods, after which he spent a year in military training at the harbor of Piraeus. At nineteen he became a citizen in a public ceremony, after which he sometimes spent another year in the cavalry or on the frontier. The citizen continued to learn in the gymnasium, lyceum, academy, or public theater, and in state service.

**Intellectual and Artistic Athens.** The Parthenon, built on the Acropolis or great hill in honor of Athena, was unrivalled in architecture. On the south side of the Acropolis was the theater of Dionysius, which seated 30,000 people. Several great play writers appeared: Sophocles, who exalted the gods; Aeschylus, who dramatized legends of old heroes and taught moral lessons; and Euripides, who introduced a note of realism in his versions of the ancient stories. Comedy developed later than tragedy and centered around topics of the day. Aristophanes, supreme in this

field, subjected men and events to ridicule and laughter, and though his plays are ribald, his aim was partly that of a reformer. Athenian plays had almost no scenery, but they reached an astonishing degree of literary perfection, and exerted a tremendous influence upon Athenian life and character.

**Great Men of Athens, Before and After Pericles.** Pericles led Athens for forty years. Three great historians wrote: Herodotus, whose work on the Persian wars is brilliant, but unreliable; Thucydides, whose treatise on the Peloponnesian war is scholarly and reliable; and Xenophon, himself a soldier, who later wrote on the Expedition of the Ten Thousand. Phidias was the greatest sculptor, but Praxiteles, who lived later, was a strong rival. Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle were the greatest philosophers, and Demosthenes was the greatest orator. No city in world history could boast of so pure a democracy, so many great men, or so highly cultured a citizenship, as could Athens. Most of these great men will be discussed in greater detail in the section devoted to the civilization of the Greek city-states.

#### THE PELOPONNESIAN WARS

**The Building of an Empire by Athens.** Because Athens was the greatest sea power in Greece, she was chosen as we have indicated, to lead the Delian League. This organization soon drove the Persians out of Asia Minor. Then, spurred on by ambition, Athens converted the League into an empire, composed of unwilling subject-cities, anxious to rebel, with jealous rivals near by ready to aid them.

**Jealousy of its Rivals.** Other cities not controlled by Athens were jealous of her power. Sparta, her ancient rival, formed a league in opposition. Corinth, Boeotia, and other cities, were also commercial rivals of Athens. This tendency to disunity was due largely to the geography of Greece, with its natural barriers of mountains and rivers, and to early Greek political institutions. It was now promoted greatly by the desire of subject cities to regain their independence.

**First Phase of the Struggle (459-446 B. C.).** Athens forced Aegina into the Delian League, and likewise gained con-

trol over Megara and Boeotia, in spite of Spartan aid to these cities. One Athenian fleet blockaded the harbor of Sparta's ally, Corinth, while another met disaster on the sea. Sparta, on account of trouble at home, could do little. At the end of the struggle Athens retained the islands of Aegina and Euboea, and the warring cities agreed to fight no more for thirty years. But this truce lasted only fifteen years.

**Second Phase (431-421 B. C.).** Corcyra, a colony of Corinth, became involved in a quarrel with the mother city. She then sought to enter the Delian League, and Athens admitted her. This meant war with the Peloponnesian League, and especially with Corinth, but Corcyra had a great fleet and Athens wanted to use it. War was therefore declared. Sparta and her allies planned to invade Attica; Athens planned to confine the war to the sea or coast alone. During the struggle Athens faced serious difficulties: disease killed many of her citizens, the enemy ravaged her fields, and some of her sea campaigns miscarried. On the other hand, since Sparta and her allies could not control the sea, they could not starve out their rival, and they were unable to secure an open battle. The Peace of Nicias ended the peculiar struggle; each side was to give up all recent conquests and was to maintain peace for fifty years.

**Third Phase (421-404 B. C.).** Athens was dissatisfied with the previous contest, for she felt that there was a good chance for a complete victory. Moreover, the Persians were again threatening and the subject allies of Athens were very restless. Alcibiades, who had gained the ascendancy after the death of Pericles, planned to force the Greeks in Italy and Sicily into the Athenian Empire. His expedition to Syracuse for this purpose failed, his opponents in Athens deposed him, and he deserted to Sparta. The destruction of an Athenian army and navy, 413 B. C., dampened the ardor of the Athenians and correspondingly encouraged the enemy. Sparta, who had no fleet and little money, sought and secured Persian aid. The Athenians recalled Alcibiades, but his forces suffered defeat at the naval battle of Arginusae, and were finally defeated at Aegospotami. At the end of the war the walls of Athens were levelled and the fleet was destroyed. She was



made dependent upon Sparta in foreign affairs, but retained her local independence. The fundamental result was a triumph for decentralization.

#### THE FAILURE OF THE GREEK POLITICAL SYSTEM

**Limitations of the Athenian Democracy.** The Athenian law courts began even under Pericles to show themselves susceptible to emotional appeals. The lower classes gained control and according to conservative writers exploited the rich unjustly. (Pericles, however, paints a more favorable picture of the balance of social classes.) The treasury of Athens became drained by the constant expenses incident to free public entertainment, pay to the juries, and wars; a deficit that was made greater through bad methods of collecting taxes and an expensive program of public works. War decimated her farms and caused the disappearance of her peasant farmers, and great estate owners took their places. Her government, therefore, failed to function in a crisis.

**Inability of the Greeks to Form a Nation.** Had the Greeks united into one nation they might have ruled the world, but they could not do so. Athens, Sparta, and Thebes successively failed to achieve such unity. Failing in this object, they were destined to be ruled by others with less intelligence.

**Spartan Supremacy (404-371 B. C.).** Athens was by no means crushed; she soon rebuilt her walls, and more slowly possessed herself of another fleet. Her commercial prosperity continued. Sparta was unfitted for the rôle of leadership, for she was almost constantly confronted with a threat of revolt at home, she lacked men and money, and was unable to rule the sea. Moreover, her harsh rule soon aroused opposition in Greece; especially galling were her policies of stationing soldiers and military governors over some of the Greek cities. Also, there was still some danger from Persia. Her strength was declining, as was proved by the Expedition of the Ten Thousand, but she still seemed determined to prevent a national union of the Greek cities, and was also anxious to regain control of Asia Minor. The Persian danger was averted, though, by the King's peace of 386 B. C. This provided that the island of Cyprus and certain cities in Asia Minor were to be under Persian control, that the islands of Lem-

nos, Imbros, and Scyros were to be ruled by Athens, and that Spartan supremacy on the mainland of Greece was recognized.

**The End of Spartan Leadership.** This peace hurt Spartan prestige and led to the formation of an anti-Spartan alliance, 395 B. C., consisting of Corinth, Argos, Athens, and Thebes. The Thebans, who were especially resentful because of the Spartan seizure of a citadel in Thebes, took the lead in the overthrow of their Laconian rivals. A Theban leader, Pelopidas, drove the Spartans from his city in 379 B. C., and the next year Thebes induced Athens to join the coalition that was being formed.

**Theban Supremacy (371-362 B. C.).** Spartan leadership ended and Theban supremacy began with the Theban victory at Leuctra. Thebes pursued the policies of suppressing Sparta and of maintaining her own supremacy on the sea. The war was renewed with another Theban victory, but Epaminondas, commander of the victorious forces, was killed, and with him fell Theban hopes.

## THE CIVILIZATION OF THE GREEK CITY-STATES

**Agriculture.** None of the Greek city-states was what we would consider wealthy. Agriculture was always an important source of wealth, but never could supply the population with surplus capital, as was the case in ancient Egypt or Babylonia. Furthermore, commerce and industry did not give rise to such huge cities as Babylon or Nineveh. The average business establishment in Athens employed but ten slaves, though at the height of its prosperity, the city witnessed certain establishments growing to such proportions as to engage up to forty slaves. One firm, in truth, is known to have employed 120 men in the making of shields. The slaves took the place of our modern machinery. Some had been bought by the merchant class in foreign lands, others had been captured in wars, and still others had in primitive times lost their personal liberty as a result of debts incurred. As a rule the owners of firms which did the same kind of work lived in the same street, such as the street of the potters, or of the masons. It was the custom of the master to work side by side with his slaves or free help. Slavery was not the necessary basis of learning an art in Athens, as has often been erroneously asserted.

**Commerce.** Merchants often cooperated in chartering vessels for their business ventures. They were sometimes in need of capital and would borrow money from bankers at fixed rates of interest ranging from ten to twenty per cent. But checks and drafts were not used. Transfer of money had to be attested by witnesses. Since manufactured goods were usually sold at or in front of the shops, the merchant class was engaged largely in the export and import trade. Exports included marble, olive oil, figs, furniture, pottery, woven goods, and articles made of bronze or iron. Among the products imported were grain, cheese, dried fish, meat, wine, perfumes, spices, carpets, and tiles. Merchants also brought to the Greek towns such raw materials as iron, lumber, ivory, hides, flax, and wool.

**Shipping.** The trade on land was handicapped by the lack of good roads, showing that it was not the policy of the government to encourage commerce. Consequently, the foreign trade was carried on most by way of the sea, for which purpose two types of vessels were employed: the small boats for coastwise shipping, measuring about fifteen tons, and larger vessels which could carry burdens of 350 tons. The vessels were propelled by oarsmen seated in rows and these were aided in propitious weather by sails. The trip from Athens to Crete, a distance of 170 miles, required about two and a half days. Seldom did the captain of the ship venture far enough from the shore to be out of sight of land. Primitive sea maps were available, but no compass and no lighthouse existed until about 250 B. C.

**Clothing Worn.** In examining for a moment the clothes worn by the Greek in classical times (500 to 300 B. C.), we are reminded of the whole environment in which the Greeks as a people were placed. Their men and women were dressed very much as were other civilized persons in the Near East. Each wore a sleeveless undergarment called *chiton*, that was fastened about the shoulders with a clasp, and an outer garment called the *himation*. Often only the *chiton* was worn. It hung loosely and gracefully upon one's body, permitting freedom of action. It might be made of wool or linen, in accordance with the change in the seasons.

**Architecture.** The Greek arts and sciences evolved under the tutelage of Egyptian and Babylonian masters, but they revealed also unmistakable evidence of genius and independence on the part of the Greeks. Since stone and marble were to be found in abundance, the Greeks freely used them, though private dwellings continued in many cases to be built of sun-dried brick, as was also the case in ancient Mesopotamia. The Greek temples are most impressive, though they were not as large as some of the buildings constructed by the Assyrians or the Persians. The use of the column was also not new. The typical Greek temple was made up of a rectangular hall, at the ends of which were placed one or two rows of columns, while sometimes columns were also placed along the sides of the building. Occasionally porches were provided as well. The hall and porches were covered with a roof made of wooden beams and protected from the elements by tiles. The earliest style is the Doric, and the most famous example the Parthenon, built on the hill at Athens called the Acropolis. The Ionic type was marked by a more slender column which was adorned with spiral volutes at the top (the capital). A superb example is the temple of Erechtheum, also on the Acropolis. An earlier Ionic temple was that of Artemis (Diana) at Ephesus, which was considered one of the Seven Wonders of the World.<sup>1</sup> The third style is the Corinthian, which evolved from the Ionic and is more complex than the two earlier forms. The best-known example of this type may be the choragic monument of Lysicrates in Athens.

**Sculpture and Painting.** Greek sculpture, even more than its architecture, illustrates the high qualities of the arts developed by the Greeks. They were one of the few peoples in the ancient world who were not dominated by religion, but applied themselves wholeheartedly to the things of "this world." Consequently, they freely portrayed the nude human body, depicted with ardor the beauties of nature, and drew upon their active imagination. Taught by the environment in which they found themselves, they developed the motto of "Nothing in excess, and everything in pro-

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<sup>1</sup> The other six were: (1) the pyramids in Egypt, (2) the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, (3) the lighthouse at Alexandria on the island of Pharos, (4) the statue of Zeus by Phidias, (5) the Colossus at Rhodes, a bronze statue of the sun god, 100 feet high, (6) the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, built for King Mausolus (died 353 B. C.) by his widow.

portion." They combined simple lines with proper proportions. They also were true to nature, patient, and full of joy, free from restraint and void of superstition. For these reasons their statues and other figures carved out of stone and marble, as well as out of bronze, gold, and silver, are superior to nearly all similar productions of other peoples in the ancient or medieval world. Their greatest sculptor, Phidias, perfected the huge statue of the goddess Athena placed before the Parthenon. Since most of the Greek paintings have been destroyed, we can say only that they probably resembled the sculpture in the admirable qualities just mentioned. One of the outstanding painters was Polygnotus.

**Literature: Epic and Lyric Poetry before 450 B. C.** Very remarkable were the contributions made by the Greeks in the field of literature. They used every form now known, including the satire, but began with epic poetry through the pen of Homer, who no doubt assisted in the composition of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The two chief writers of lyric poetry were the poet Pindar (about 450 B. C.) and the poetess Sappho (about 600 B. C.).

**Drama.** The Greek drama, both tragedy and comedy, reached its greatest height in the period from 525 to 400 B. C., when the three famous writers, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, flourished. Aeschylus was noted for his description of scenes in the Persian Wars, in which he had fought. He was a serious-minded, philosophical person, given over to a sense of duty and patriotism, as may be seen in his masterpiece, *Prometheus Bound*. Perhaps even better known is his *Agamemnon*, in which he tells of the return of a hero from Troy and his murder by his wife, Clytemnestra, and her lover. Sophocles was more interested in ordinary human activities and relations than in heroic deeds. His finest work is the *Oedipus Tyrannus*, but it is probable that, since only seven out of perhaps over a hundred of his plays are still extant, some of his lost works even surpass that just mentioned. Euripides wrote plays which represented the gods as very human. He directs one's sympathies toward mortals, as may be seen in his beautiful work, *Iphigenia Among the Taurians*. Ari-

stophanes wrote satirical comedies, including the *Frogs*, in which he satirized Euripides, and the *Clouds*, which ridicules Socrates, representing him as one of the less capable Sophists.

**History and Oratory.** The most famous composer of orations was Demosthenes (385-322 B. C.), whose best work was entitled *On the Crown*. In this and other orations he warned against the power of Philip of Macedon. The two greatest Greek historians were Herodotus and Thucydides, both of whom lived in the fifth century B. C. Herodotus has left a painstaking work dealing with the Persian Wars, and excellent descriptions of society in the many countries he visited, such as Egypt, Babylonia, and Italy. Thucydides wrote about the civil war between Athens and Sparta. He was much more accurate than his predecessor, Herodotus.

**General Characteristics of Classical Greek Literature.** The classical literature of Greece is noted especially for simplicity of expression, realism (a truthful description of things as they are), appreciation of beauty and grace, both in the theme and the style, and superb literary technique. There has never been a people that was able to surpass the Greeks in these respects.

**Mathematics.** But in turning to the fields of science, mathematics, philosophy, and religion, we must be on our guard, for fear that we shall repeat the exaggerated praise that has often in the past been bestowed upon the Greeks. The leading authorities on the history of mathematics are of the opinion that in arithmetic, geometry, and algebra the Greeks made very little advance over the Egyptians and the Babylonians, while they did still less with trigonometry. We owe to them, however, the terminology now used in geometry, the methods of proof, and the fundamental principles, as expressed so ably in Euclid's *Elements*. But Euclid lived in a late period (323-285 B. C.).

**Astronomy.** When Thales, the Greek astronomer, lived (about 585 B. C.), it was known that the earth has the shape of a sphere, while before 300 B. C. it was understood that the earth revolves on its axis once every 24 hours. But this information probably was first known to the scholars to the south and east of

Greece. It is not surprising that the first Greek philosopher and astronomer of importance, Thales, lived near the west coast of Asia Minor.

**Medicine.** In medicine and the natural sciences the Greeks were exceptionally successful. Ever since 500 B. C. the nature and the symptoms of diseases had been carefully studied by them. Schools of medicine were established, among them that of the famous expert, Hippocrates, who insisted that medicine should be regarded as a serious occupation. His high ideals are perpetuated in the "Oath of Hippocrates," accepted even today by our physicians. The science of biology was practically non-existent until it was founded by Aristotle, whose works on the natural sciences were used as textbooks in the medieval universities. The same is true of his treatises on rhetoric and political science.

**Philosophy.** Prominent in this field was Socrates (469-399 B. C.), who taught that there is but one God and that the soul is immortal. Socrates argued that one must learn to "know himself," meaning that a person should not waste so much of his time thinking and talking about things that are of no great importance, such as sports, the making of money, amusements, heavy eating and drinking, and the like, but should discuss virtue and seek it. He taught by means of the dialogue (the Socratic method) and left no writings of his own.

**Plato's Philosophy.** Plato (427-347 B. C.) was the most famous pupil of Socrates and the greatest philosopher of antiquity. He was also the author of works on political science, such as his *Republic*, in which he described an ideal state of society. But he is known principally as a philosopher; even in his *Republic* he speaks more as a philosopher than as an expert in political science, such as was his pupil, Aristotle. According to Plato, God is the creator of the universe, the supreme Spirit, who is present everywhere. The only things that are real and eternal are spiritual forces, or ideas. Ideas, in Plato, are general concepts, which can be known only by the reason. Man was originally perfect and good, but somehow fell from his privileged position. He must learn to return to his original position of righteousness and goodness.

**The Position of Aristotle.** Aristotle (384-322 B. C.), though a pupil of Plato, differed considerably from his master in that he was immensely interested in the world of material objects, in plants, animals, physics, political institutions, rhetoric, and grammar. He surpassed Plato as a scientist, but was inferior to Plato as a philosopher.

**The Sophists.** Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle were vastly superior to that host of popular teachers called the Sophists. Some of these were good and capable men, but many were mere quacks. The latter gave rise to the term "sophisticated," for they emphasized elegance of speech and manners at the expense of learning and virtue. Led by the more intelligent ideas of Democritus and Empedocles, but not understanding them, they developed materialistic conceptions of the universe and of human society. They scoffed at popular piety and were in turn despised by such profound thinkers as Socrates and Plato. The latter taught a sort of realism which conflicted with the sheerly materialistic view of evolution held by Empedocles, who stated that air, fire, water, and earth are the four primary and indestructible elements in the universe.

**Aristotle as a Scientist.** Aristotle, unlike Plato, was more interested in science than in philosophy or religion. He stated, for example, that life is not a separate force but functions only in the operations of organisms like plants and animals. He devoted three works to animals and founded in a sense systematic zoology. However, his knowledge of the human body was mediocre. In his book, entitled *Physics*, he discussed motion, space, the process of becoming a living organism, and the nature of matter. His masterpiece was the *Politics*, which was the result of the study of 158 constitutions of Greek city-states. He recommended popular education for men only, advised the limitations of commerce and industry, in order that men might have more leisure for good living and study, and despised the lower classes.

**Plato's Political and Sociological Views.** In the *Republic*, Plato stated that slavery should be abolished (Aristotle disagreed with him); all workers should be free, but not all should be citizens, as in Sparta; women and real estate should be held in



common, and children be brought up by nurses in the payment of the state. He advocated communism for the sake of better government, not in order to improve the economic conditions among the poor. In his work entitled the *Laws*, he recommended state socialism. It is no wonder that many leaders among the early and the medieval Christians warned their readers or auditors against Platonic politics and social ideals.

**Greek Religion.** In the period before Plato, that is, before 380 B. C., the Greeks had worshipped or believed in many gods, whom they considered to be endowed with bodies and passions closely resembling those of human beings. As a matter of fact, even the greatest of the gods were supposed to be unspeakably immoral, an idea which clearly reveals the spiritual blindness of the Greeks when they were at the height of their power, that is, in the fifth century B. C. Hesiod, who lived in the seventh century B. C. and who wrote *Theogony*, or the *Genealogy of the Gods*, believed that man originally had been much stronger, wiser, and better than he was now, having descended from the first age (of gold) to the fifth age (of iron). The story of the Flood also was one of the features of early Greek religion. But whatever may have been the sources of the Greek religion, it became a jumble and a confused mixture of myth, legend, and tradition.

**The Priests.** The Greeks were of the belief that every state, social group, even the family, had some patron god who had to be placated. In each city the priests were appointed for public duties just as were the civil officials. The priests officiated at many functions, including divination, or the art of examining sacrificed animals to see what could be learned from their actions or the appearance of their internal organs. This practice was widely followed in the ancient world and is severely condemned in the Old Testament. More important were the signs and omens presented at temples or shrines of the *oracles*, particularly that of Apollo at Delphi. Both private individuals and state governments consulted with the priests in these sacred places. The thought does not seem to have occurred to the ordinary Greek between 700 and 400 B. C. that human beings might establish a direct spiritual relation with the gods or with God.

**Eternal Life.** The notion of a future life was almost totally neglected by many of the Greeks. They could conceive only of a drab existence in the realm of the dead, controlled by the god called Hades. Such Greeks as Socrates, however, looked toward communion with the spirits of the great. The demand for a more satisfactory religion led to the growth of the so-called "mystery" religions, which promised a life of future happiness after death to those who would cleanse their souls of impurity and sin, and would pass through certain secret ceremonies. Through the priests the god of each cult gave instructions to the devotees.

**Greek Religious Celebrations.** Very interesting were the great religious festivals intended to propitiate the deities of the respective states. One of these was of a national character, that is, it made an appeal to the inhabitants of all the Greek states, and it was naturally held in honor of Zeus, chief of all the gods. The place selected for the festival was Olympia and gave rise to the Olympic games—racing with horses and chariots, wrestling, running, jumping, and so forth. Participants arrived each time from many Greek states and colonies. In 1896 the Olympic games were renewed, the first at Athens, the next in Paris (1900), the next in St. Louis. It will be seen that now, as formerly, they are held once in four years. That such games were the accompaniment of a religious festival among the Greeks was only natural, and indicates the peculiar nature of Greek religion.